

English Literature for Secondary Schools  
*General Editor:—J. H. FOWLER, M.A.*

## DEFENCE OF POESY



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TORONTO

Sir Philip Sidney's  
Defence of Poesy

*Edited by*

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MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1919

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## PREFACE

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY, in his *Defence of Poesy*, performed a unique service for English literature, examining a little of what had been done, advising what might be done, and doing, incidentally, in his adjustment of prose to his own ends, a thing that greatly needed to be done. His essay, deeply interesting as a record of a peculiar phase in the development of ideas, is equally interesting for its place in the history of prose style. Yet, neither as criticism nor as prose is it absolute: we have outgrown Sidney's puritanism and his euphuism. And for this reason,—that while being very beautiful both as reasoned argument and as pure eloquence, it still continually brings forward doctrines to be controverted and mannerisms not to be imitated,—the book is excellently provocative of critical discussion.

For such discussion on general principles of literature—the nature and function of poetry, the laws of drama, the excellences and defects of style, and so on—there is, I think, an undoubted need in the more advanced English classes of public and secondary schools. The usual comparative criticism of Keats and Shelley, Wordsworth and Byron, Tennyson and Browning, involves much artificial reckoning of values and helps but little in the training of a just, liberal and independent critical faculty. It is in the hope of providing a suggestive source for discussion on more abstract and general lines that the present edition of *The Defence of Poesy* has been prepared.

The questions and exercises being the sole justification of this edition, I have made these fairly full, and confined the glossarial index and notes to what seemed essential only.

The teacher will find it necessary to select from among the questions and exercises, which are of different degrees of difficulty,

those within the capacity of the class: there are some—the last, for instance—which will perhaps be attempted by nobody. I have set this and other unanswerable problems in the faith that on such “quests poetical,” although we fail forever to capture the truth we are seeking, we shall gather much that is precious by the way.

The text of the present edition follows the edition printed by Olney in 1595, entitled *An Apologic for Poetrie*, with a few emendations from that published in the same year by Ponsonby and called *The Defense of Poesie*. These were the earliest editions issued. Both the originals being at present inaccessible, I have relied chiefly on Arber's reprint of the Olney, and on the valuable edition with variant readings made in 1898 by Mr. A. S. Cook.

I have retained Ponsonby's title because Sidney himself calls his work a “Defence” and because this word seems better suited than “Apology” to convey his meaning to the modern reader.

D. M. M.

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## INTRODUCTION

THERE are great writers, poets especially, of whom we can think without any strong consciousness of the time in which they lived; but Sir Philip Sidney is not one of them. When he enters upon the stage of our imagination there troops about him the whole pageant, with all its music and bravery, of Elizabethan England. We cannot think of him without his England or of his England without him. He was one of the men of whom that proud time was proudest, and the legend of his life and death is one of the illustrious things that his age left to the world.

It is not as an exception that Sidney is remembered, nor for high-piled achievements, but as a promise and a token of what the spirit of that day could create. In his brief life he played with remarkable completeness and distinction the part which a nobleman of Elizabeth's court was expected to play. He studied the classics, travelled on diplomatic missions, leaving kindly thoughts of England in foreign cities; he attended on the Queen, wrote a masque for her entertainment, advised in her councils and fought in her wars. He fell in love and wrote sonnets to his lady; wrote a romance and a learned treatise and made sweet songs for music. Had the Queen not prevented it he would have sailed to America with Drake. Had death not prevented it he would doubtless have written a tragedy. He won a golden reputation and noble friends, and died in the wars—a death accompanied with circumstances of heroic gentleness.

He was not merely "the glass of fashion," though most of what was gallant, and something of what was fantastic and transitory—nothing of what was mean—in Elizabeth's England seems reflected in him. If he served Elizabeth, it was because he

believed in her greatness; if he read the classics, it was because he liked them; if he wrote love-sonnets, it was because he was in love. He was known for an honest statesman, a fearless courtier and a true poet, and "withal" (as his friend Fulke Greville said of him), "withal such a lover of mankind and goodness, that whoever had any real parts in him found comfort, participation and protection to the uttermost of his power."

Sidney's generation belonged to the richest era of English poetry, and he should have shared the day-spring; but he died just too soon. He was only thirty-two years old when he died in Flanders in 1586. For all his eagerness to welcome poetry he had found nothing written in English since Chaucer's time, save a ballad or two, that could give him the highest poetic pleasure: nothing at all to compare with "the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar." It seemed a barren season. In truth, it was a phase of change, a restless mood of shifting values, crumbling laws, uncertain standards. Nobody knew quite what qualities the language had, of what rhythms it was capable in verse or prose; or what, besides Ciceronian rhetoric, might be good in style, or what a poet should write about, or how a play should be made. Sidney gave anxious thought to all these confused questions and both by his criticism and his poetry brought some light into the dimness; but he died just before the day. Had he lived only another half-dozen years he would have seen the beginning of his friend Spenser's *Faery Queen*, the first of Marlowe's plays, and the first of Shakespeare's.

Whether Sidney would have entirely liked *Tamburlaine* and *Love's Labour's Lost* is, however, questionable; for, like most scholars, he still put all his trust in the great classics of Greece and Rome. His philosopher was Plato, his law-giver in tragedy was Aristotle, his poets were Homer, Pindar and Virgil. For a time, persuaded by the Cambridge pedant Gabriel Hervey, he even maintained that English poets ought to write in the classical metres. Moreover, his feeling for poetry was a little puritan. His songs and sonnets certainly are cavalier enough, but his theory, as set out in his *Defence of Poesy*, would make us believe that his pleasure in poetry was not that swift, inexplicable delight which is only an intensified moment of the delight of being alive,

but a pleasure more directly akin to his love "of mankind and goodness." Sidney took, in great characters and noble deeds, that almost passionate joy which a musician takes in music, an artist in his art; and he loved the old, great epics and tragedies because they fill the imagination with that grandeur.

Maybe a mind in love with classic magnificence would have been slow in seeing that something widely different from it could be equally great. It is distressing to think that Sidney might have lectured Shakespeare. But we need not think it: despite Fulke Greville's evidence to the contrary, Sidney was not all gravity,—witness his twenty-first sonnet. It is written, one would guess, to his venerable friend Hubert Languet, who had evidently rebuked him for wasting his time and noted gifts in the pursuit of love. Yes, Sidney admits, his monitor is just:

"For since mad March great promise made of me,  
If now the May of my years much decline,  
What can be hoped my harvest-time will be?  
Sure, you say well: your wisdom's golden mine  
Dig deep with learning's spade.

Now tell me this—

Hath the world aught so fair as Stella is?"

Even if the *Comedy of Errors* had shocked the scholar and critic, *Romeo and Juliet* would have won the lover and poet.

In his practice, Sidney was, indeed, by no means severely classical: in his literary adventures, as in his other activities, he went triumphantly through the phases proper to the period, and ran, at the first release from court, as fantastical a wild-goose chase as any writer of the day.

In 1580, having brought the Queen's displeasure upon himself by a very frank and forcible letter of protest against her proposed marriage with the Duke of Anjou, Sidney was absent for a while from court. He spent the summer with his "most dear, and most worthy to be most dear" sister, the Countess of Pembroke, at Wilton, and there, "lulled asleep in shady idleness with poets' pastimes," he let the fancies bred of his reading and his dreams take life, and wrote for her diversion a long, meandering romance. He called his book the *Arcadia*, after tales of the kind by the Italian Sanazzaro and his followers. Such pastoral stories,

idylls of the loves of faithful or faithless swains and shepherdesses, were as popular abroad as the chivalric romances of distressed damsels and heroic knights. Sidney mingled adventures of both kinds and interspersed his prose with songs; his Muse was making holiday and was to be restrained in no extravagance: invention begot invention and phrase suggested phrase, until the whole became an intricate and decorated medley that dazzles the reader's mind with words before he can find a meaning. Largely, this extravagant style was the fault of John Lyly, who had just produced, in imitation of a manner fashionable abroad, an amazing book called *Euphues: the Anatomy of Wit*. His profuse imagery and sententious, rhetorical speeches, and the elaborate rhythm of his prose, in which phrase balances phrase and letter echoes letter, "running in rattling rows,"<sup>1</sup> infected English wit like a fever: instantly "Euphuism" became a plague. Sidney, although he mocked these "dainty wits" who

"With strange similes enrich each line

Of herbs or beasts which Ind or Afric hold,"<sup>2</sup>

by no means escaped the infection: "Arcadianism" is different from "Euphuism," but not so very different.

It was a phase that was bound to come,—the revel of young, unsteady imaginations sowing their wild oats. Words are a snare; rhythm is a lure; prose has no confining laws; the creative power of these was almost a new discovery;—at least, that they themselves could command this magic in English was a new discovery: what wonder that the young romanticists ran astray!

Sidney was, like the rest, using wit, words and invention to dress slight fancies out in finery; but all the time deep feeling and grave thought were growing in him, and he soon knew that he could do finer things than this in prose and verse. How the first lesson in the true art of poetry came to him is told in his sonnets to Stella.

His "Stella" was Penelope Devereux, daughter of his old friend the Earl of Essex. She married Lord Rich, and Sidney in 1583 married Frances Walsingham; but before this there had been a troubadour wooing, during which Sidney wrote for

<sup>1</sup> Sonnet XV.

<sup>2</sup> Sonnet III.

Penelope his famous and beautiful sequence of sonnets, *Astrophel to Stella*.

Every talented young courtier just then was writing "wailful sonnets" of love. The young Earl of Surrey had begun it in England, having caught the infection in France and in Italy, where Petrarch's beautiful sonnets to Laura made poets think this difficult little stanza the loveliest in the world. *Tottel's Miscellany*, containing the sonnets of the Earl of Surrey, had appeared in 1557, and now any young poet who had no scornful lady to complain to must discover or invent an object for his devotion and his verse. Sidney laughs a little at these fantastical wooers, and denies that he is of their company,—

"You that poor Petrarch's long-deceased woes

With new-born sighs and denizen'd wit do sing":<sup>1</sup>

he has learnt to make a truer song. He tells how he longed to write a poem for Stella, "in verse my love to show"; tried to invent fine images, tried to find inspiration in the pages of great poets:

"Oft turning others' leaves to see if thence would flow

Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburn'd brain";<sup>2</sup>

but all to no result; until, suddenly,

"Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite;

Fool, said my Muse to me, look in thy heart and write."

It was a good lesson, and the fruits of it are good. Sidney's sonnets are among the most beautiful, excepting Shakespeare's, in English; and he proved the lesson, too, in his next prose undertaking, *The Defence of Poesy*.

Poetry, being at that time a matter of living interest, a thing that the age was making anew, had fierce enemies in England as well as noble lovers. Sidney was well known to be a lover, indeed the knightly champion of poetry. Nevertheless, when, in 1579, one of the enemy, Stephen Gosson, wrote an attack on poets and poetry, he actually dedicated his book—*The School of Abuse*—to Sir Philip Sidney.

It was probably not until after his marriage (in 1583) that Sidney took up the challenge and resolved to write "a pitiful

<sup>1</sup> Sonnet XV.

<sup>2</sup> Sonnet I.

defence of poor poetry." He had a task by no means simple; one that required rare qualities of temper and intellect as well as poetic appreciation. The fitting of English prose to such a work had yet to be attempted: the decorative style of the romances was too fantastic to be employed in argument, and the controversial prose, such as the writers of the Reformation had used, was too stern for so pleasant a subject as the praise of poetry. Sidney's aim was to persuade, to show the virtue and sweetness of poetry so truly that all should come to reverence and desire it. He had definite charges to answer, and must be thorough, firm and strictly logical in meeting these; yet he must not wrong the grace and dignity of his theme by harshness or solemnity. He was himself a poet, young, impetuous, and given to "arcadian" rhapsodies of language: but now he must write with calm moderation, as a just and reasonable advocate. He took up the task and wrote a book which, even though its argument is now outworn, will surely be read for ever. It is a little masterpiece of persuasion. The argument is firmly and honestly handled, the sentences have a clean precision—the quality rightly called "wit," and the structure of the whole essay is clear and gracefully proportioned; the reason and intellect are satisfied. But under this convincing force, moving through every part of the essay, breaking out now and then in pure merriment, is some witchery that beguiles the heart all the while that the head is being plied with argument. Through the sedate prose runs something that captures us in the poet's way. The truth is that Sidney was writing with his whole heart, and he was in love with his subject, and, as happens when a poet's imagination is properly at work, his own mood, his delight, his humour, his enthusiasm, flow out in the very sound and cadence of his phrases. Our nerves and senses are all the time being wrought upon by a sweet and changeful rhythm.

This, perhaps, is one secret of the charm of his book; another is the visual quality of what might have been colourless, abstract disquisition. Sidney had the typical Elizabethan imagination, quick, concrete, visual, and into his mind, with the thought of philosophy, comes the picturesque image of the philosopher. This tendency which ran in the romances to interminable simile

and description, here, controlled, varies and lightens the argument, as it were, with quaint illustrations.

Besides this variation from abstract to concrete there is a lively variety of mood ; for Sidney is in earnest, yet sometimes, as though his own earnestness amused him, he runs into a strain of the old euphuistic extravagance, or mocks the preacher out of the pulpit with a wild hyperbole. And all—argument, mockery, eloquence, imagery, wit—are fused by a poet's ardour for poetry into an infinitely persuasive whole.

If Sidney had lived for three-score years and ten and written in his old age, we might have had a very different book ; we could have hardly had one so modest and fearless, so youthful and grave and gay.

As it is, the reward of reading this book is not quite what the author intended it to be ; because, probably, we are his converts before we begin to hear his argument : the reward is the companionship of the writer ; for "the style is the man," and Sir Philip Sidney is good company. We can understand his friends' delight in him, even the hero-worship that made Fulke Greville bid it be written upon his tomb that he had been "Servant to Queen Elizabeth, Counsellor to King James, Friend to Sir Philip Sidney."<sup>1</sup> We can understand the mourning England made for him, and the sorrow of the poets who crowned his immortality with their immortal praise.

He thought, when he was dying, that he had "walked in a vain course,"<sup>2</sup> and lived to no good purpose ; and indeed, if we count by the volume of a man's definite and palpable achievement, it seems hard to tell why Sidney should live so radiant in England's memory. It is as if, in spite of death, the strong intention of his life, the great purpose of truth and service that was in him, had forced a way into the world and would not die. That eager and unashamed enthusiasm for all that is noble in man and man's imaginings, which was so fine an inspiration to his own age, lives as an inspiration still.

The spirit of the man is more completely expressed in the *Defence*, perhaps, than even in the sweetest of his songs,

<sup>1</sup> The tomb in St. Mary's, Warwick.

<sup>2</sup> Fulke Greville's *Life of Sir Philip Sidney*.

because in this we have him as a fighter, and, if we too love poesy, as a friend. It leaves an illusion of having talked with him, a lingering memory of a loyal, happy presence, of

“A sweet attractive kind of grace,  
A full assurance given by looks,  
Continual comfort in a face,  
The lineaments of Gospel books.”<sup>1</sup>

The world has grown too old for hero-worship; yet Spenser spoke for more generations than his own when he wrote of his dead Astrophel

“and sure, full dear of all he loved was.”

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Roydon's elegy.



## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- 1400. Death of Chaucer.
- 1490. Sanazzaro's *Arcadia*.
- 1516. More's *Utopia*.
- 1539. The Great Bible.
- 1554. Birth of Philip Sidney.
- 1557. *Tottel's Miscellany*.
- 1558. Accession of Elizabeth.
- 1559. *A Mirror for Magistrates*.
- 1561. Scaliger's *Poetics*.
- 1561. *Gorboduc* acted.
- 1575 (?) Sidney's sonnets, *Astrophe and Stella*, begin.
- 1577. Drake's voyage round the world begun.
- 1578. Lyly's *Euphues*.
- 1579. Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*.
- 1579. Gosson's *School of Abuse*.
- 1580. Sidney's *Arcadia*.
- 1583 (?) Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* written.
- 1586. Death of Sidney.



## DEFENCE OF POESY

WHEN the right virtuous Edward Wotton and I were at (I) the Emperor's court together, we gave ourselves to learn horsemanship of John Pietro Pugliano, one that with great commendation had the place of an esquire in his stable; and he, according to the fertileness of the Italian wit, did not only afford us the demonstration of his practice, but sought to enrich our minds with the contemplations therein which he thought most precious. But with none I remember mine ears were at any time more loaden, than when—either angered with slow payment, or moved with our learner-like admiration—he exercised his speech in the praise of his faculty. He said soldiers were the noblest estate of mankind, and horsemen the noblest of soldiers. He said they were the masters of war and ornaments of peace, speedy goers and strong abiders, triumphers both in camps and courts. Nay, to so unbelieved a point he proceeded, as that no earthly thing bred such wonder to a prince as to be a good horseman; skill of government was but a *pedanteria*<sup>1</sup> in comparison. Then would he add certain praises, by telling what a peerless beast the horse was, the only serviceable courtier without flattery, the beast of most beauty, faithfulness, courage, and such more, that if I had not been a piece of a logician before I came to him, I think he would have persuaded me to have wished myself a horse. But thus much at least with his no few words he drave into me, that self-love is better than any gilding to make that seem gorgeous wherein ourselves be parties.

<sup>1</sup> A piece of academic learning.

Wherein if Pugliano's strong affection and weak arguments will not satisfy you, I will give you a nearer example of myself, who, I know not by what mischance, in these my not old years and idlest times, having slipped into the title of a poet, am provoked to say something unto you in the defence of that my unelected vocation, which if I handle with more good will than good reasons, bear with me, sith the scholar is to be pardoned that followeth the steps of his master.

- (II) And yet I must say that, as I have just cause to make a pitiful defence of poor poetry, which from almost the highest estimation of learning is fallen to be the laughing-stock of children, so have I need to bring some more available proofs, sith the former is by no man barred of his deserved credit, the silly latter hath had even the names of philosophers used to the defacing of it, with great danger of civil war among the Muses.

And first, truly, to all them that, professing learning, inveigh against poetry, may justly be objected that they go very near to ungratefulness, to seek to deface that which, in the noblest nations and languages that are known, hath been the first light-giver to ignorance, and first nurse, whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges. And will they now play the hedgehog, that, being received into the den, drove out his host? Or rather the vipers, that with their birth kill their parents? Let learned Greece in any of her manifold sciences be able to show me one book before Musæus, Homer, and Hesiod, all three nothing else but poets. Nay, let any history be brought that can say any writers were there before them, if they were not men of the same skill, as Orpheus, Linus, and some other are named, who, having been the first of that country that made pens deliverers of their knowledge to their posterity, may justly challenge to be called their fathers in learning. For not only in time they had this priority (although in itself antiquity be venerable) but went before them as causes, to draw with their charming sweetness the wild untamed wits

to an admiration of knowledge. So as Amphion was said to move stones with his poetry to build Thebes, and Orpheus to be listened to by beasts, indeed stony and beastly people. So among the Romans were Livius Andronicus and Ennius ; so in the Italian language the first that made it aspire to be a treasure-house of science were the poets Dante, Boccace, and Petrarch ; so in our English were Gower and Chaucer, after whom, encouraged and delighted with their excellent foregoing, others have followed to beautify our mother-tongue, as well in the same kind as in other arts.

This did so notably show itself, that the philosophers of Greece durst not a long time appear to the world but under the masks of poets. So Thales, Empedocles, and Parmenides sang their natural philosophy in verses ; so did Pythagoras and Phocylides their moral counsels ; so did Tyrtæus in war matters, and Solon in matters of policy ; or rather they, being poets, did exercise their delightful vein in those points of highest knowledge which before them lay hid to the world. For that wise Solon was directly a poet it is manifest, having written in verse the notable fable of the Atlantic Island which was continued by Plato. And truly even Plato whosoever well considereth, shall find that in the body of his work, though the inside and strength were philosophy, the skin, as it were, and beauty depended most of poetry. For all standeth upon dialogues ; wherein he feigneth many honest burgesses of Athens to speak of such matters that, if they had been set on the rack, they would never have confessed them ; besides his poetical describing the circumstances of their meetings, as the well-ordering of a banquet, the delicacy of a walk, with interlacing mere tales, as Gyges' Ring and others, which who knoweth not to be flowers of poetry did never walk into Apollo's garden.

And even historiographers, (although their lips sound of things done, and verity be written in their foreheads,) have been glad to borrow both fashion and perchance weight of poets. So Herodotus entituled his history by the name of

the nine Muses ; and both he and all the rest that followed him either stole or usurped of poetry their passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battles which no man could affirm, or, if that be denied me, long orations put in the mouths of great kings and captains, which it is certain they never pronounced.

So that truly neither philosopher nor historiographer could, at the first, have entered into the gates of popular judgments, if they had not taken a great passport of poetry ; which in all nations at this day, where learning flourisheth not, is plain to be seen, in all which they have some feeling of poetry. In Turkey, besides their lawgiving divines they have no other writers but poets. In our neighbour-country Ireland, where truly learning goeth very bare, yet are their poets held in a devout reverence. Even among the most barbarous and simple Indians, where no writing is, yet have they their poets, who make and sing songs (which they call *areytos*), both of their ancestors' deeds and praises of their gods. A sufficient probability that, if ever learning come among them, it must be by having their hard dull wits softened and sharpened with the sweet delights of poetry ; for until they find a pleasure in the exercises of the mind, great promises of much knowledge will little persuade them that know not the fruits of knowledge. In Wales, the true remnant of the ancient Britons, as there are good authorities to show the long time they had poets, which they called bards, so through all the conquests of Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans, some of whom did seek to ruin all memory of learning from among them, yet do their poets even to this day last ; so as it is not more notable in soon beginning, than in long continuing.

- (III) But since the authors of most of our sciences were the Romans, and before them the Greeks, let us a little stand upon their authorities, but even so far as to see what names they have given unto this now scorned skill. Among the Romans a poet was called *vates*, which is as much as a diviner, foreseer, or prophet, as by his conjoined words, *vaticinium*

and *vaticinari*, is manifest; so heavenly a title did that excellent people bestow upon this heart-ravishing knowledge. And so far were they carried into the admiration thereof, that they thought in the chanceable hitting upon any such verses great foretokens of their following fortunes were placed; whereupon grew the word of *Sortes Virgilianae*, when by sudden opening Virgil's book they lighted upon any verse of his making; whereof the Histories of the Emperors' Lives are full: as of Albinus, the governor of our island, who in his childhood met with this verse,

*Arma amens capio, nec sat rationis in armis,*<sup>1</sup>

and in his age performed it; which although it were a very vain and godless superstition, as also it was to think that spirits were commanded by such verses—whereupon this word charms, derived of *carmina*, cometh—so yet serveth it to show the great reverence those wits were held in, and altogether not without ground, since both the oracles of Delphos and Sibylla's prophecies were wholly delivered in verses; for that same exquisite observing of number and measure in words, and that high-flying liberty of conceit proper to the poet, did seem to have some divine force in it.

And may not I presume a little further to show the reasonableness of this word *vates*, and say that the holy David's Psalms are a divine poem? If I do, I shall not do it without the testimony of great learned men, both ancient and modern. But even the name Psalms will speak for me, which, being interpreted, is nothing but Songs; then, that it is fully written in metre, as all learned Hebricians agree, although the rules be not yet fully found; lastly and principally, his handling his prophecy, which is merely poetical. For what else is the awaking his musical instruments, the often and free changing of persons, his notable *prosopopoeias*, when he maketh you, as it were, see God coming in His majesty, his telling of the beasts' joyfulness and hills' leaping, but a heavenly

<sup>1</sup> Distracted, I seize my arms, nor have I sufficient purpose in arms. Virgil, *Aeneid*, ii. 314.

poesy, wherein almost he showeth himself a passionate lover of that unspeakable and everlasting beauty to be seen by the eyes of the mind, only cleared by faith ? But truly, now, having named him, I fear me I seem to profane that holy name, applying it to poetry, which is among us thrown down to so ridiculous an estimation. But they that with quiet judgments will look a little deeper into it, shall find the end and working of it such as, being rightly applied, deserveth not to be scourged out of the church of God.

But now let us see how the Greeks named it and how they deemed of it. The Greeks called him a Poet, which name hath, as the most excellent, gone through other languages. It cometh of this word *poiein*, which is "to make"; wherein I know not whether by luck or wisdom we Englishmen have met with the Greeks in calling him a maker. Which name, how high and incomparable a title it is, I had rather were known by marking the scope of other sciences than by my partial allegation.

There is no art delivered unto mankind that hath not the works of nature for his principal object, without which they could not consist, and on which they so depend as they become actors and players, as it were, of what nature will have set forth. So doth the astronomer look upon the stars, and, by that he seeth, set down what order nature hath taken therein. So do the geometrician and arithmetician in their divers sorts of quantities. So doth the musician in times tell you which by nature agree, which not. The natural philosopher thereon hath his name, and the moral philosopher standeth upon the natural virtues, vices, and passions of man ; and "follow nature," saith he, "therein, and thou shalt not err." The lawyer saith what men have determined ; the historian what men have done. The grammarian speaketh only of the rules of speech, and the rhetorician and logician, considering what in nature will soonest prove and persuade, thereon give artificial rules, which still are compassed within the circle of a question, according to the proposed matter.



The physician weigheth the nature of man's body, and the nature of things helpful or hurtful unto it. And the metaphysic, though it be in the second and abstract notions, and therefore be counted supernatural, yet doth he, indeed, build upon the depth of nature.

Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow, in effect, into another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demi-gods, cyclops, chimeras, furies, and such like ; so as he goeth hand in hand with Nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done ; neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too-much-loved earth more lovely ; her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden.

But let those things alone, and go to man—for whom as the other things are, so it seemeth in him her uttermost cunning is employed—and know whether she have brought forth so true a lover as Theagenes ; so constant a friend as Pylades ; so valiant a man as Orlando ; so right a prince as Xenophon's Cyrus ; so excellent a man every way as Virgil's Aeneas ? Neither let this be jestingly conceived, because the works of the one be essential, the other in imitation or fiction ; for any understanding knoweth the skill of the artificer standeth in that idea, or fore-conceit of the work, and not in the work itself. And that the poet hath that idea is manifest, by delivering them forth in such excellency as he hath imagined them. Which delivering forth, also, is not wholly imaginative, as we are wont to say by them that build castles in the air ; but so far substantially it worketh, not only to make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency, as nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyruses, if they will learn aright why and

how that maker made him. Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man's wit with the efficacy of nature ; but rather give right honour to the Heavenly Maker of that maker, who, having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature. Which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when, with the force of a divine breath, he bringeth things forth far surpassing her doings, with no small argument to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of Adam, —sith our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it. But these arguments will by few be understood, and by fewer granted ; thus much I hope will be given me, that the Greeks, with some probability of reason, gave him the name above all names of learning.

- (IV) Now let us go to a more ordinary opening of him, that the truth may be the more palpable ; and so, I hope, though we get not so unmatched a praise as the etymology of his names will grant, yet his very description, which no man will deny, shall not justly be barred from a principal commendation.

Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word *Mimesis*, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth ; to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end, to teach and delight.

Of this have been three several kinds. The chief, both in antiquity and excellency, were they that did imitate the inconceivable excellencies of God. Such were David in his Psalms ; Solomon in his Song of Songs, in his Ecclesiastes and Proverbs ; Moses and Deborah in their Hymns ; and the writer of Job ; which, beside other, the learned Emanuel Tremellius and Franciscus Junius do entitle the poetical part of the Scripture. Against these none will speak that hath the Holy Ghost in due holy reverence. In this kind, though in a full wrong divinity, were Orpheus, Amphion, Homer in his Hymns, and many other, both Greeks and Romans. And this poesy must be used by whosoever will follow St. James

his counsel in singing psalms when they are merry ; and I know is used with the fruit of comfort by some, when, in sorrowful pangs of their death-bringing sins, they find the consolation of the never-leaving goodness.

The second kind is of them that deal with matters philosophical : either moral, as Tyrtaeus, Phocylides, and Cato ; or natural, as Lucretius and Virgil's Georgics ; or astronomical, as Manilius and Pontanus ; or historical, as Lucan ; which who mislike, the fault is in their judgment, quite out of taste, and not in the sweet food of sweetly uttered knowledge.

But because this second sort is wrapped within the fold of the proposed subject, and takes not the free course of his own invention, whether they properly be poets or no let grammarians dispute, and go to the third, indeed right poets, of whom chiefly this question ariseth. Betwixt whom and these second is such a kind of difference as betwixt the meaner sort of painters, who counterfeit only such faces as are set before them, and the more excellent, who having no law but wit, bestow that in colours upon you which is fittest for the eye to see ; as the constant though lamenting look of Lucretia, when she punished in herself another's fault ; wherein he painteth not Lucretia, whom he never saw, but painteth the outward beauty of such a virtue. For these third be they which most properly do imitate to teach and delight ; and to imitate borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be ; but range, only reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be and should be. These be they that, as the first and most noble sort, may justly be termed *vates* ; so these are waited on in the excellentest languages and best understandings with the foredescribed name of poets. For these, indeed, do merely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach, and delight to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger ; and teach to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved ; which being the noblest scope to

which ever any learning was directed, yet want there not idle tongues to bark at them.

These be subdivided into sundry more special denominations. The most notable be the heroic, lyric, tragic, comic, satiric, iambic, elegiac, pastoral, and certain others, some of these being termed according to the matter they deal with, some by the sorts of verses they liked best to write in,—for indeed the greatest part of poets have apparelled their poetical inventions in that numerous kind of writing which is called verse. Indeed but apparelled, verse being but an ornament and no cause to poetry, sith there have been many most excellent poets that never versified, and now swarm many versifiers that need never answer to the name of poets. For Xenophon, who did imitate so excellently as to give us *effigiem justi imperii*—the portraiture of a just empire, under the name of Cyrus (as Cicero saith of him) made therein an absolute heroical poem; so did Heliodorus in his sugared invention of that picture of love in Theagenes and Chariclea; and yet both these writ in prose. Which I speak to show that it is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet (no more than a long gown maketh an advocate, who, though he pleaded in armour, should be an advocate and no soldier,) but it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by. Although indeed the Senate of Poets hath chosen verse as their fittest raiment, meaning, as in matter they passed all in all, so in manner to go beyond them; not speaking, (table-talk fashion, or like men in a dream,) words as they chanceably fall from the mouth, but peizing each syllable of each word by just proportion, according to the dignity of the subject.

- (V) Now, therefore, it shall not be amiss, first to weigh this latter sort of poetry by his works, and then by his parts; and if in neither of these anatomies he be condemnable, I hope we shall obtain a more favourable sentence. This purifying of wit, this enriching of memory, enabling of judg-

ment, and enlarging of conceit, which commonly we call learning, under what name soever it come forth or to what immediate end soever it be directed, the final end is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of. This, according to the inclination of man, bred many-formed impressions. For some that thought this felicity principally to be gotten by knowledge, and no knowledge to be so high or heavenly as acquaintance with the stars, gave themselves to astronomy; others, persuading themselves to be demigods if they knew the causes of things, became natural and supernatural philosophers. Some an admirable delight drew to music, and some the certainty of demonstration to the mathematics; but all, one and other, having this scope: to know, and by knowledge to lift up the mind from the dungeon of the body to the enjoying his own divine essence. But when by the balance of experience it was found that the astronomer, looking to the stars, might fall into a ditch, that the inquiring philosopher might be blind in himself, and the mathematician might draw forth a straight line with a crooked heart; then lo! did proof, the overruler of opinions, make manifest, that all these are but serving sciences, which, as they have each a private end in themselves, so yet are they all directed to the highest end of the mistress-knowledge, by the Greeks called *architektonikē*, which stands, as I think, in the knowledge of a man's self, in the ethic and politic consideration, with the end of well-doing, and not of well-knowing only; even as the saddler's next end is to make a good saddle, but his further end to serve a nobler faculty, which is horsemanship; so the horseman's to soldiery; and the soldier not only to have the skill, but to perform the practice of a soldier. So that the ending end of all earthly learning being virtuous action, those skills that most serve to bring forth that have a most just title to be princes over all the rest; wherein, if we can show, the poet is worthy to have it before any other competitors.

Among whom as principal challengers step forth the moral philosophers ; whom, me thinketh, I see coming toward me with a sullen gravity, (as though they could not abide vice by daylight,) rudely clothed, for to witness outwardly their contempt of outward things ; with books in their hands against glory, whereto they set their names ; sophistically speaking against subtlety ; and angry with any man in whom they see the foul fault of anger. These men, casting largess as they go of Definitions, Divisions, and Distinctions, with a scornful interrogative do soberly ask whether it be possible to find any path so ready to lead a man to virtue, as that which teacheth what virtue is, and teacheth it not only by delivering forth his very being, his causes and effects, but also by making known his enemy, Vice, which must be destroyed, and his cumbersome servant, Passion, which must be mastered, by showing the generalities that containeth it, and the specialities that are derived from it ; lastly, by plain setting down how it extendeth itself out of the limits of a man's own little world, to the government of families, and maintaining of public societies ?

The historian scarcely giveth leisure to the moralist to say so much, but that he, loaden with old mouse-eaten records, authorizing himself for the most part upon other histories, whose greatest authorities are built upon the notable foundation of hearsay ; having much ado to accord differing writers, and to pick truth out of partiality ; better acquainted with a thousand years ago than with the present age, and yet better knowing how this world goeth than how his own wit runneth ; curious for antiquities and inquisitive of novelties, a wonder to young folks and a tyrant in table-talk ; denieth, in a great chafe, that any man for teaching of virtue and virtuous actions is comparable to him. "I am *testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis*, etc.<sup>1</sup> The philosopher," saith he, "teacheth a

<sup>1</sup> Witness of the times, light of truth, the life of memory, the teacher of life, and the messenger of antiquity. CICERO, *De Oratore*, II. ix. 36.

disputative virtue, but I do an active. His virtue is excellent in the dangerless Academy of Plato, but mine sheweth forth her honourable face in the battles of Marathon, Pharsalia, Poitiers, and Agincourt. He teacheth virtue by certain abstract considerations, but I only bid you follow the footing of them that have gone before you. Old-aged experience goeth beyond the fine-witted philosopher; but I give the experience of many ages. Lastly, if he make the song-book, I put the learner's hand to the lute; and if he be the guide, I am the light." Then would he allege you innumerable examples, conferring story by story, how much the wisest senators and princes have been directed by the credit of history, as Brutus, Alphonsus of Aragon (and who not, if need be?). At length the long line of their disputation maketh a point in this, that the one giveth the precept, and the other the example.

Now whom shall we find, sith the question standeth for (VI) the highest form in the school of learning, to be moderator? Truly, as me seemeth, the poet; and if not a moderator, even the man that ought to carry the title from them both, and much more from all other serving sciences. Therefore compare we the poet with the historian and with the moral philosopher; and if he go beyond them both, no other human skill can match him. For as for the divine, with all reverence it is ever to be excepted, not only for having his scope as far beyond any of these as eternity exceedeth a moment, but even for passing each of these in themselves. And for the lawyer, though *Jus* be the daughter of Justice, and Justice the chief of virtues, yet because he seeketh to make men good rather *formidine poenae* than *virtutis amore*; <sup>1</sup> or, to say righter, doth not endeavour to make men good, but that their evil hurt not others; having no care, so he be a good citizen, how bad a man he be; therefore, as our wickedness maketh him necessary, and necessity maketh him honourable, so is he not in the deepest truth to stand in rank

<sup>1</sup> Rather by fear of punishment than by love of virtue.

with these, who all endeavour to take naughtiness away, and plant goodness even in the secretest cabinet of our souls. And these four are all that any way deal in that consideration of men's manners, which being the supreme knowledge, they that best breed it deserve the best commendation.

The philosopher therefore and the historian are they which would win the goal, the one by precept, the other by example ; but both, not having both, do both halt. For the philosopher, setting down with thorny argument the bare rule, is so hard of utterance and so misty to be conceived, that one that hath no other guide but him shall wade in him till he be old, before he shall find sufficient cause to be honest. For his knowledge standeth so upon the abstract and general, that happy is that man who may understand him, and more happy that can apply what he doth understand. On the other side, the historian, wanting the precept, is so tied, not to what should be but to what is, to the particular truth of things and not to the general reason of things, that his example draweth no necessary consequence, and therefore a less fruitful doctrine.

Now doth the peerless poet perform both ; for whatsoever the philosopher saith should be done, he giveth a perfect picture of it in some one by whom he presupposeth it was done, so as he coupleth the general notion with the particular example. A perfect picture, I say ; for he yieldeth to the powers of the mind an image of that whereof the philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description, which doth neither strike, pierce, nor possess the sight of the soul so much as that other doth. For as, in outward things, to a man that had never seen an elephant or a rhinoceros, who should tell him most exquisitely all their shapes, colour, bigness, and particular marks ; or of a gorgeous palace, the architecture, with declaring the full beauties, might well make the hearer able to repeat, as it were by rote, all he had heard, yet should never satisfy his inward conceit with being witness to itself of a true lively knowledge ; but the same man, as soon as he might see those beasts well painted, or that house well in model,



should straightways grow, without need of any description, to a judicial comprehending of them : so no doubt the philosopher, with his learned definitions, be it of virtues or vices, matters of public policy or private government, replenisheth the memory with many infallible grounds of wisdom, which notwithstanding lie dark before the imaginative and judging power, if they be not illuminated or figured forth by the speaking picture of poesy.

Tully taketh much pains, and many times not without poetical helps, to make us know the force love of our country hath in us. Let us but hear old Anchises speaking in the midst of Troy's flames, or see Ulysses, in the fulness of all Calypso's delights, bewail his absence from barren and beggarly Ithaca. Anger, the Stoics said, was a short madness. Let but Sophocles bring you Ajax on a stage, killing or whipping sheep and oxen, thinking them the army of Greeks, with their chieftains Agamemnon and Menelaus, and tell me if you have not a more familiar insight into anger, than finding in the schoolmen his genus and difference. See whether wisdom and temperance in Ulysses and Diomedes, valour in Achilles, friendship in Nisus and Euryalus, even to an ignorant man carry not an apparent shining. And, contrarily, the remorse of conscience in Oedipus ; the soon-repenting pride of Agamemnon ; the self-devouring cruelty in his father Atreus ; the violence of ambition in the two Theban brothers ; the sour sweetness of revenge in Medea ; and, to fall lower, the Terentian Gnatho and our Chaucer's Pandar, so expressed that we now use their names to signify their trades ; and finally, all virtues, vices, and passions so in their own natural states laid to the view, that we seem not to hear of them, but clearly to see through them.

But even in the most excellent determination of goodness, what philosopher's counsel can so readily direct a prince, as the feigned Cyrus in Xenophon ? Or a virtuous man in all fortunes, as Aeneas in Virgil ? Or a whole commonwealth, as the way of Sir Thomas More's Utopia ? I say the way,

because where Sir Thomas More erred, it was the fault of the man, and not of the poet; for that way of patterning a commonwealth was most absolute, though he, perchance, hath not so absolutely performed it. For the question is, whether the feigned image of poesy, or the regular instruction of philosophy, hath the more force in teaching. Wherein if the philosophers have more rightly showed themselves philosophers than the poets have attained to the high top of their profession, (as in truth,

Mediocribus esse poetis

Non Di, non homines, non concessere columnae,<sup>1</sup>)

it is, I say again, not the fault of the art, but that by few men that art can be accomplished.

Certainly, even our Saviour Christ could as well have given the moral commonplaces of uncharitableness and humbleness as the divine narration of Dives and Lazarus; or of disobedience and mercy, as that heavenly discourse of the lost child and the gracious father; but that his through-searching wisdom knew the estate of Dives burning in hell, and of Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, would more constantly, as it were, inhabit both the memory and judgment. Truly, for myself, me seems I see before mine eyes the lost child's disdainful prodigality turned to envy a swine's dinner; which by the learned divines are thought not historical acts, but instructing parables.

For conclusion, I say the philosopher teacheth, but he teacheth obscurely, so as the learned only can understand him; that is to say, he teacheth them that are already taught. But the poet is the food for the tenderest stomachs; the poet is indeed the right popular philosopher. Whereof Aesop's tales give good proof; whose pretty allegories, stealing under the formal tales of beasts, make many, more beastly than beasts, begin to hear the sound of virtue from those dumb speakers.

<sup>1</sup> Neither men nor Gods, nor even the tablets (of the booksellers) condone mediocrity in poets. HORACE, *Ars Poetica*, 372-3 (inexactly quoted).

But now may it be alleged that if this imagining of matters (VII) be so fit for the imagination, then must the historian needs surpass, who bringeth you images of true matters, such as indeed were done, and not such as fantastically or falsely may be suggested to have been done. Truly, Aristotle himself, in his Discourse of Poesy, plainly determineth this question, saying that poetry is *philosophoteron* and *spoudaioteron*, that is to say, it is more philosophical and more studiously serious than history. His reason is, because poesy dealeth with *katholou*, that is to say with the universal consideration, and the history with *kath' hekaston*, the particular. "Now," saith he, "the universal weighs what is fit to be said or done, either in likelihood or necessity, which the poesy considereth in his imposed names; and the particular only marketh whether Alcibiades did, or suffered, this or that": thus far Aristotle. Which reason of his, as all his, is most full of reason.

For, indeed, if the question were whether it were better to have a particular act truly or falsely set down, there is no doubt which is to be chosen, no more than whether you had rather have Vespasian's picture right as he was, or, at the painter's pleasure, nothing resembling. But if the question be for your own use and learning, whether it be better to have it set down as it should be or as it was, then certainly is more doctrinable the feigned Cyrus of Xenophon than the true Cyrus in Justin; and the feigned Aeneas in Virgil than the right Aeneas in Dares Phrygius; as to a lady that desired to fashion her countenance to the best grace, a painter should more benefit her to portraiture a most sweet face, writing Canidia upon it, than to paint Canidia as she was, who, Horace sweareth, was foul and ill-favoured.

If the poet do his part aright, he will show you in Tantalus, Atreus, and such like, nothing that is not to be shunned; in Cyrus, Aeneas, Ulysses, each thing to be followed. Where the historian, bound to tell things as things were, cannot be liberal (without he will be poetical,) of a perfect pattern, but, as in Alexander, or Scipio himself, show doings, some to be

liked, some to be disliked; and then how will you discern what to follow, but by your own discretion, which you had without reading Quintus Curtius? And whereas a man may say, though in universal consideration of doctrine the poet prevailleth, yet that the history, in his saying such a thing was done, doth warrant a man more in that he shall follow, the answer is manifest: that if he stand upon that *was*, as if he should argue, because it rained yesterday therefore it should rain to-day, then indeed it hath some advantage to a gross conceit. But if he know an example only informs a conjectured likelihood, and so go by reason, the poet doth so far exceed him as he is to frame his example to that which is most reasonable, be it in warlike, politic, or private matters; where the historian in his bare *was* hath many times that which we call fortune to overrule the best wisdom. Many times he must tell events whereof he can yield no cause; or if he do, it must be poetically.

For, that a feigned example hath as much force to teach as a true example, (for as for to move, it is clear, since the feigned may be tuned to the highest key of passion,) let us take one example wherein a poet and a historian do concur. Herodotus and Justin do both testify that Zopyrus, king Darius' faithful servant, seeing his master long resisted by the rebellious Babylonians, feigned himself in extreme disgrace of his king; for verifying of which he caused his own nose and ears to be cut off, and so flying to the Babylonians, was received, and for his known valour so far credited, that he did find means to deliver them over to Darius. Much like matter doth Livy record of Tarquinius and his son. Xenophon excellently feigneth such another stratagem, performed by Abradatus in Cyrus' behalf. Now would I fain know, if occasion be presented unto you to serve your prince by such an honest dissimulation, why do you not as well learn it of Xenophon's fiction as of the other's verity? and, truly, so much the better, as you shall save your nose by the bargain; for Abradatus did not counterfeit so far.

So, then, the best of the historian is subject to the poet ; for whatsoever action or faction, whatsoever counsel, policy, or war-stratagem the historian is bound to recite, that may the poet, if he list, with his imitation make his own, beautifying it both for further teaching and more delighting, as it pleaseth him ; having all, from Dante's Heaven to his Hell, under the authority of his pen. Which if I be asked what poets have done so ? as I might well name some, yet say I, and say again, I speak of the art, and not of the artificer.

Now, to that which commonly is attributed to the praise of histories, in respect of the notable learning is gotten by marking the success, as though therein a man should see virtue exalted and vice punished, truly that commendation is peculiar to poetry and far off from history. For, indeed, poetry ever setteth virtue so out in her best colours, making Fortune her well-waiting handmaid, that one must needs be enamoured of her. Well may you see Ulysses in a storm, and in other hard plights ; but they are but exercises of patience and magnanimity, to make them shine the more in the near following prosperity. And, of the contrary part, if evil men come to the stage, they ever go out, (as the tragedy writer answered to one that misliked the show of such persons) so manacled, as they little animate folks to follow them. But the historian, being captived to the truth of a foolish world, is many times a terror from well-doing, and an encouragement to unbridled wickedness. For see we not valiant Miltiades rot in his fetters ? The just Phocion and the accomplished Socrates put to death like traitors ? The cruel Severus live prosperously ? The excellent Severus miserably murdered ? Sylla and Marius dying in their beds ? Pompey and Cicero slain then, when they would have thought exile a happiness ? See we not virtuous Cato driven to kill himself, and rebel Caesar so advanced that his name yet, after sixteen hundred years, lasteth in the highest honour ? And mark but even Caesar's own words of the forenamed Sylla, (who in that only did honestly, to put down his dis-

honest tyranny), *litteras nescivit*:<sup>1</sup> as if want of learning caused him to do well. He meant it not by poetry, which, not content with earthly plagues, deviseth new punishments in hell for tyrants; nor yet by philosophy, which teacheth *occidendos esse*; <sup>2</sup> but, no doubt, by skill in history, for that indeed can afford you Cypselus, Periander, Phalaris, Dionysius, and I know not how many more of the same kennel, that speed well enough in their abominable injustice or usurpation.

(VIII) I conclude, therefore, that he excelleth history, not only in furnishing the mind with knowledge, but in setting it forward to that which deserveth to be called and accounted good; which setting forward, and moving to well-doing, indeed setteth the laurel crown upon the poet as victorious, not only of the historian, but over the philosopher, howsoever in teaching it may be questionable. For suppose it be granted, (that which I suppose with great reason may be denied,) that the philosopher, in respect of his methodical proceeding, doth teach more perfectly than the poet, yet do I think that no man is so much *philophilosophos*<sup>3</sup> as to compare the philosopher in moving with the poet. And that moving is of a higher degree than teaching, it may by this appear, that it is well nigh both the cause and the effect of teaching; for who will be taught, if he be not moved with desire to be taught? And what so much good doth that teaching bring forth (I speak still of moral doctrine,) as that it moveth one to do that which it doth teach? For, as Aristotle saith, it is not *gnosis* but *praxis*<sup>4</sup> must be the fruit; and how *praxis* can be, without being moved to practise, it is no hard matter to consider. The philosopher sheweth you the way, he informeth you of the particularities, as well of the tediousness of the way, as of the pleasant lodging you shall have when your journey is ended, as of the many by-turnings that may divert you from your way; but this is to no man but to him that

<sup>1</sup> He was ignorant of letters.

<sup>2</sup> that they are to be slain (CICERO, *De Officiis*).

<sup>3</sup> A lover of the philosopher.

<sup>4</sup> Not theory but practice.

will read him, and read him with attentive, studious painfulness; which constant desire whosoever hath in him, hath already passed half the hardness of the way, and therefore is beholding to the philosopher but for the other half. Nay, truly, learned men have learnedly thought, that where once reason hath so much overmastered passion as that the mind hath a free desire to do well, the inward light each mind hath in itself is as good as a philosopher's book; since in nature we know it is well to do well, and what is well and what is evil, although not in the words of art which philosophers bestow upon us; for out of natural conceit the philosophers drew it. But to be moved to do that which we know, or to be moved with desire to know, *hoc opus, hic labor est*.<sup>1</sup>

Now therein of all sciences, (I speak still of human, and according to the human conceit,) is our poet the monarch. For he doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter into it. Nay, he doth, as if your journey should lie through a fair vineyard, at the very first give you a cluster of grapes, that full of that taste you may long to pass further. He beginneth not with obscure definitions, which must blur the margin with interpretations, and load the memory with doubtfulness. But he cometh to you with words set in delightful proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for, the well-enchancing skill of music; and with a tale, forsooth, he cometh unto you, with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney-corner; and, pretending no more, doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue; even as the child is often brought to take most wholesome things, by hiding them in such other as have a pleasant taste, —which, if one should begin to tell them the nature of the aloes or rhubarb they should receive, would sooner take their physic at their ears than at their mouth. So is it in men, (most of which are childish in the best things, till they be cradled in their graves,) glad they will be to hear the tales

<sup>1</sup> This is the difficulty, this the toil. VIRGIL, *Aeneid*, VI. 129.

of Hercules, Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas ; and, hearing them, must needs hear the right description of wisdom, valour, and justice ; which, if they had been barely, (that is to say philosophically,) set out, they would swear they be brought to school again.

That imitation whereof poetry is, hath the most conveniency to nature of all other ; insomuch that, as Aristotle saith, those things which in themselves are horrible, as cruel battles, unnatural monsters, are made in poetical imitation delightful. Truly, I have known men, that even with reading Amadis de Gaule, (which, God knoweth, wanteth much of a perfect poesy,) have found their hearts moved to the exercise of courtesy, liberality, and especially courage. Who readeth Aeneas carrying old Anchises on his back, that wisheth not it were his fortune to perform so excellent an act ? Whom do not those words of Turnus move, the tale of Turnus having planted his image in the imagination ?

Fugientem haec terra videbit ?

Usque adeone mori miserum est ? <sup>1</sup>

Where the philosophers, as they scorn to delight, so must they be content little to move, saving wrangling whether virtue be the chief or the only good, whether the contemplative or the active life do excel, which Plato and Boethius well knew, and therefore made Mistress Philosophy very often borrow the masking raiment of Poesy. For even those hard-hearted evil men who think virtue a school-name, and know no other good but *indulgere genio*,<sup>2</sup> and therefore despise the austere admonitions of the philosopher, and feel not the inward reason they stand upon, yet will be content to be delighted, which is all the good-fellow poet seemeth to promise ; and so steal to see the form of goodness (which seen, they cannot but love) ere themselves be aware, as if they took a medicine of cherries.

Infinite proofs of the strange effects of this poetical invention might be alleged ; only two shall serve, which are

<sup>1</sup> Shall this land see me a fugitive ? Is it, after all, so pitiful a thing to die ? VIRGIL, *Aeneid*, xii. 645-6.

<sup>2</sup> to indulge our desires.



so often remembered as I think all men know them. The one of Menenius Agrippa, who, when the whole people of Rome had resolutely divided themselves from the senate, with apparent show of utter ruin, though he were, for that time, an excellent orator, came not among them upon trust either of figurative speeches or cunning insinuations, and much less with far-fetched maxims of philosophy, which, (especially if they were Platonic,) they must have learned geometry before they could well have conceived ; but, forsooth, he behaves himself like a homely and familiar poet. He telleth them a tale, that there was a time when all the parts of the body made a mutinous conspiracy against the belly, which they thought devoured the fruits of each other's labour ; they concluded they would let so unprofitable a spender starve. In the end, to be short—for the tale is notorious, and as notorious that it was a tale—with punishing the belly they plagued themselves. This, applied by him, wrought such effect in the people, as I never read that ever words brought forth but then so sudden and so good an alteration ; for upon reasonable conditions a perfect reconciliation ensued.

The other is of Nathan the prophet, who, when the holy David had so far forsaken God as to confirm adultery with murder, when he was to do the tenderest office of a friend, in laying his own shame before his eyes, (sent by God to call again so chosen a servant,) how doth he it but by telling of a man whose beloved lamb was ungratefully taken from his bosom ? The application most divinely true, but the discourse itself feigned ; which made David (I speak of the second and instrumental cause) as in a glass to see his own filthiness, as that heavenly Psalm of Mercy well testifieth.

By these, therefore, examples and reasons, I think it may be manifest that the poet, with that same hand of delight, doth draw the mind more effectually than any other art doth. And so a conclusion not unfitly ensueth : that as virtue is the most excellent resting-place for all worldly learning to make his end of, so poetry, being the most familiar to teach

it, and most princely to move towards it, in the most excellent work is the most excellent workman.

- (IX) But I am content not only to decipher him by his works, (although works in commendation or dispraise must ever hold a high authority,) but more narrowly will examine his parts; so that, as in a man, though all together may carry a presence full of majesty and beauty, perchance in some one defectious piece we may find a blemish.

Now in his parts, kinds, or species, (as you list to term them,) it is to be noted that some poesies have coupled together two or three kinds, as tragical and comical, whereupon is risen the tragi-comical; some, in the like manner, have mingled prose and verse, as Sannazzaro and Boethius; some have mingled matters heroical and pastoral; but that cometh all to one in this question, for, if severed they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtful. Therefore, perchance forgetting some, and leaving some as needless to be remembered, it shall not be amiss in a word to cite the special kinds, to see what faults may be found in the right use of them.

Is it then the pastoral poem which is misliked?—for perchance where the hedge is lowest they will soonest leap over. Is the poor pipe disdained, which sometimes out of Meliboeus' mouth can show the misery of people under hard lords and ravening soldiers, and again, by Tityrus, what blessedness is derived to them that lie lowest from the goodness of them that sit highest? sometimes, under the pretty tales of wolves and sheep, can include the whole considerations of wrong-doing and patience; sometimes show that contention for trifles can get but a trifling victory; where perchance a man may see that even Alexander and Darius, when they strave who should be cock of this world's dunghill, the benefit they got was that the after-livers may say:

Haec memini et victum frustra contendere Thyrsim;  
Ex illo Corydon, Corydon est tempore nobis.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These verses I remember and that Thyrsis vanquished, contested in vain. Henceforth it is Corydon, Corydon for us. VIRGIL, *Eclogue*, vii. 69-70.

Or is it the lamenting elegiac, which in a kind heart would move rather pity than blame ; who bewaileth, with the great philosopher Heraclitus, the weakness of mankind and the wretchedness of the world ; who surely is to be praised, either for compassionate accompanying just causes of lamentation, or for rightly painting out how weak be the passions of wofulness ?

Is it the bitter but wholesome iambic, who rubs the galled mind, in making shame the trumpet of villainy with bold and open crying out against naughtiness ?

Or the satiric ? who

Omne vafer vitium ridenti tangit amico ;<sup>1</sup>

who sportingly never leaveth till he make a man laugh at folly, and at length ashamed to laugh at himself, which he cannot avoid without avoiding the folly ; who, while *circum prae cordia ludit*,<sup>2</sup> giveth us to feel how many headaches a passionate life bringeth us to,—how, when all is done,

Est Ulubris, animus si nos non deficit aequus.<sup>3</sup>

No, perchance it is the comic ; whom naughty play-makers and stage-keepers have justly made odious. To the argument of abuse I will answer after. Only thus much now is to be said, that the comedy is an imitation of the common errors of our life, which he representeth in the most ridiculous and scornful sort that may be, so as it is impossible that any beholder can be content to be such a one. Now, as in geometry the oblique must be known as well as the right and in arithmetic the odd as well as the even ; so in the actions of our life who seeth not the filthiness of evil, wanteth a great foil to perceive the beauty of virtue. This doth the comedy handle so, in our private and domestical matters, as with hearing it we get, as it were, an experience what is to

<sup>1</sup> Shrewdly touches every fault of his laughing friend. PERSIUS, *Satire*, i. 116-7 (adapted).

<sup>2</sup> He plays about the strings of the heart. From the same passage as 1.

<sup>3</sup> (Even here) at Ulubrae is it (that we seek) if we lack not serenity of soul. HORACE, *Epistles*, i. xi. 30 (inexactly quoted).

be looked for of a niggardly Demea, of a crafty Davus, of a flattering Gnatho, of a vain-glorious Thraso ; and not only to know what effects are to be expected, but to know who be such, by the signifying badge given them by the comedian. And little reason hath any man to say that men learn evil by seeing it so set out, since, as I said before, there is no man living, but by the force truth hath in nature, no sooner seeth these men play their parts, but wisheth them *in pistrinum*,<sup>1</sup> although perchance the sack of his own faults lie so behind his back, that he seeth not himself to dance the same measure, — whereto yet nothing can more open his eyes than to find his own actions contemptibly set forth.

So that the right use of comedy will, I think, by nobody be blamed, and much less of the high and excellent tragedy, that openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue ; that maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humours ; that with stirring the effects of admiration and commiseration teacheth the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations gilden roofs are builded ; that maketh us know :

Qui sceptrā saevus duro imperio regit,

Timet timentes, metus in auctorem redit.<sup>2</sup>

But how much it can move, Plutarch yieldeth a notable testimony of the abominable tyrant Alexander Pheræus ; from whose eyes a tragedy, well made and represented, drew abundance of tears, who without all pity had murdered infinite numbers, and some of his own blood ; so as he that was not ashamed to make matters for tragedies, yet could not resist the sweet violence of a tragedy. And if it wrought no further good in him, it was that he, in despite of himself, withdrew himself from hearkening to that which might mollify his hardened heart. But it is not the tragedy they do mislike,

<sup>1</sup> in the pounding-mill.

<sup>2</sup> The cruel tyrant who wields his sceptre with harsh rule, he fears those who fear him, and terror recoils upon its author. SENECA, *Oedipus*, 705-6.

for it were too absurd to cast out so excellent a representation of whatsoever is most worthy to be learned.

Is it the lyric that most displeaseth, who with his tuned lyre and well-accorded voice, giveth praise, the reward of virtue, to virtuous acts; who giveth moral precepts and natural problems; who sometimes raiseth up his voice to the height of the heavens, in singing the lauds of the immortal God? Certainly I must confess mine own barbarousness; I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet; and yet it is sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style; which being so evil apparelled in the dust and cobwebs of that uncivil age, what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar? In Hungary I have seen it the manner at all feasts, and other such meetings, to have songs of their ancestors' valour, which that right soldier-like nation think the chiefest kindlers of brave courage. The incomparable Lacedaemonians did not only carry that kind of music ever with them to the field, but even at home, as such songs were made, so were they all content to be singers of them; when the lusty men were to tell what they did, the old men what they had done, and the young men what they would do. And where a man may say that Pindar many times praiseth highly victories of small moment, matters rather of sport than virtue; as it may be answered, it was the fault of the poet, and not of the poetry, so indeed the chief fault was in the time and custom of the Greeks, who set those toys at so high a price that Philip of Macedon reckoned a horserace won at Olympus among his three fearful felicities. But as the inimitable Pindar often did, so is that kind most capable and most fit to awake the thoughts from the sleep of idleness, to embrace honourable enterprises.

There rests the heroical, whose very name, I think, should daunt all backbiters. For by what conceit can a tongue be directed to speak evil of that which draweth with it no less champions than Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas, Turnus, Tydeus,

Rinaldo ? who doth not only teach and move to a truth, but teacheth and moveth to the most high and excellent truth; who maketh magnanimity and justice shine through all misty fearfulness and foggy desires ; who, if the saying of Plato and Tully be true, that who could see virtue would be wonderfully ravished with the love of her beauty, this man seteth her out to make her more lovely, in her holiday apparel, to the eye of any that will deign not to disdain until they understand. But if anything be already said in the defence of sweet poetry, all concurreth to the maintaining the heroical, which is not only a kind, but the best and most accomplished kind of poetry. For, as the image of each action stirreth and instructeth the mind, so the lofty image of such worthies most inflameth the mind with desire to be worthy, and informs with counsel how to be worthy. Only let Aeneas be worn in the tablet of your memory, how he governeth himself in the ruin of his country ; in the preserving his old father, and carrying away his religious ceremonies ; in obeying the gods' commandment to leave Dido, though not only all passionate kindness, but even the human consideration of virtuous gratefulness, would have craved other of him ; how in storms, how in sports, how in war, how in peace, how a fugitive, how victorious, how besieged, how besieging, how to strangers, how to allies, how to enemies, how to his own ; lastly, how in his inward self, and how in his outward government ; and I think, in a mind not prejudiced with a prejudicating humour, he will be found in excellency fruitful. Yea, even as Horace saith, *melius Chrysippo et Crantore*.<sup>1</sup> But, truly, I imagine it falleth out with these poet-whippers as with some good women who often are sick, but in faith they cannot tell where. So the name of poetry is odious to them, but neither his cause nor effects, neither the sum that contains him nor the particularities descending from him, give any fast handle to their carping dispraise.

<sup>1</sup> HORACE (*Epistles*, I. ii. 4) finds moral inspiration in the divine tale of Troy "more than in (the philosophers) Chrysippus and Crantor."

Sith, then, poetry is of all human learnings the most ancient (X) and of most fatherly antiquity, as from whence other learnings have taken their beginnings; sith it is so universal that no learned nation doth despise it, nor no barbarous nation is without it; sith both Roman and Greek gave divine names unto it, the one of prophesying, the other of making, and that indeed that name of making is fit for him, considering that whereas other arts retain themselves within their subject, and receive, as it were, their being from it, the poet only, bringeth his own stuff, and doth not learn a conceit out of a matter, but maketh matter for a conceit; sith neither his description nor his end containeth any evil. the thing described cannot be evil; sith his effects be so good as to teach goodness, and delight the learners of it; since therein (namely in moral doctrine, the chief of all knowledges,) he doth not only far pass the historian, but for instructing is well nigh comparable to the philosopher, and for moving leaveth him behind him; sith the Holy Scripture, (wherein there is no uncleanness,) hath whole parts in it poetical, and that even our Saviour Christ vouchsafed to use the flowers of it; sith all his kinds are not only in their united forms, but in their several dissections fully commendable; I think, and think I think rightly, the laurel crown appointed for triumphing captains doth worthily, of all other learnings, honour the poet's triumph.

But because we have ears as well as tongues, and that the (XI) lightest reasons that may be will seem to weigh greatly, if nothing be put in the counter-balance, let us hear, and, as well as we can, ponder, what objections be made against this art, which may be worthy either of yielding or answering.

First, truly, I note not only in these *misomousoi*, poet-haters, but in all that kind of people who seek a praise by disparaging others, that they do prodigally spend a great many wandering words in quips and scoffs, carping and taunting at each thing which, by stirring the spleen, may stay the brain from a through-beholding the worthiness of the subject.

Those kind of objections, as they are full of a very idle easiness (sith there is nothing of so sacred a majesty but that an itching tongue may rub itself upon it), so deserve they no other answer, but, instead of laughing at the jest, to laugh at the jester. We know a playing wit can praise the discretion of an ass, the comfortableness of being in debt, and the jolly commodity of being sick of the plague. So of the contrary side, if we will turn Ovid's verse,

Ut lateat virtus proximitate mali,

"that good lie hid in nearness of the evil." Agrippa will be as merry in showing the vanity of science, as Erasmus was in commending of folly; neither shall any man or matter escape some touch of these smiling railers. But for Erasmus and Agrippa, they had another foundation than the superficial part would promise. Marry, these other pleasant fault-finders, who will correct the verb before they understand the noun, and confute others' knowledge before they confirm their own, I would have them only remember that scoffing cometh not of wisdom; so as the best title in true English they get with their merriments is to be called good fools, for so have our grave forefathers ever termed that humorous kind of jesters.

But that which giveth greatest scope to their scorning humours is rhyming and versing. It is already said, (and as I think truly said,) it is not rhyming and versing that maketh poesy. One may be a poet without versing, and a versifier without poetry. But yet presuppose it were inseparable (as indeed it seemeth Scaliger judgeth,) truly it were an inseparable commendation. For if *oratio* next to *ratio*, speech next to reason, be the greatest gift bestowed upon mortality, that cannot be praiseless which doth most polish that blessing of speech; which considereth each word, not only, (as a man may say,) by his forcible quality, but by his best-measured quantity; carrying even in themselves a harmony, without, perchance, number, measure, order, proportion be in our time grown odious.



But lay aside the just praise it hath by being the only fit speech for music (music, I say, the most divine striker of the senses,) thus much is undoubtedly true, that if reading be foolish without remembering, memory being the only treasurer of knowledge, those words which are fittest for memory are likewise most convenient for knowledge. Now that verse far exceedeth prose in the knitting up of the memory, the reason is manifest; the words, (besides their delight, which hath a great affinity to memory,) being so set, as one cannot be lost but the whole work fails; which, accusing itself, calleth the remembrance back to itself, and so most strongly confirmeth it. Besides, one word so, as it were, begetting another, as, be it in rhyme or measured verse, by the former a man shall have a near guess to the follower. Lastly, even they that have taught the art of memory have showed nothing so apt for it as a certain room divided into many places, well and thoroughly known; now that hath the verse in effect perfectly, every word having his natural seat, which seat must needs make the word remembered. But what needeth more in a thing so known to all men? Who is it that ever was a scholar that doth not carry away some verses of Virgil, Horace, or Cato, which in his youth he learned, and even to his old age serve him for hourly lessons? as:

Percontatorem fugito, nam garrulus idem est.<sup>1</sup>

Dum sibi quisque placet, credula turba sumus.<sup>2</sup>

But the fitness it hath for memory is notably proved by all delivery of arts, wherein, for the most part, from grammar to logic, mathematic, physic, and the rest, the rules chiefly necessary to be borne away are compiled in verses. So that verse being in itself sweet and orderly, and being best for memory, the only handle of knowledge, it must be in jest that any man can speak against it.

<sup>1</sup> Flee the inquisitive man, for he is likewise a babler. HORACE, *Epistles*, I. xviii. 69.

<sup>2</sup> While each one is pleasing himself, we are a credulous lot. OVID, *Remed. Amor.* 686.

(XII) Now, then, go we to the most important imputations laid to the poor poets : for aught I can yet learn they are these.

First, that there being many other more fruitful knowledges, a man might better spend his time in them than in this.

Secondly, that it is the mother of lies.

Thirdly, that it is the nurse of abuse, infecting us with many pestilent desires, with a siren's sweetness drawing the mind to the serpent's tail of sinful fancies, and herein especially comedies give the largest field to ear, as Chaucer saith ; how, both in other nations and in ours, before poets did soften us, we were full of courage, given to martial exercises, the pillars of manlike liberty, and not lulled asleep in shady idleness with poets' pastimes.

And, lastly and chiefly, they cry out with an open mouth, as if they had overshot Robin Hood, that Plato banished them out of his Commonwealth. Truly this is much, if there be much truth in it.

First, to the first : that a man might better spend his time is a reason indeed ; but it doth, (as they say,) but *petere principium*.<sup>1</sup> For if it be, as I affirm, that no learning is so good as that which teacheth and moveth to virtue, and that none can both teach and move thereto so much as poesy, then is the conclusion manifest that ink and paper cannot be to a more profitable purpose employed. And certainly, though a man should grant their first assumption, it should follow, (me thinks,) very unwillingly, that good is not good because better is better. But I still and utterly deny that there is sprung out of earth a more fruitful knowledge.

To the second, therefore, that they should be the principal liars, I answer paradoxically, but truly, I think truly, that of all writers under the sun the poet is the least liar, and though he would, as a poet, can scarcely be a liar. The astronomer, with his cousin the geometrician, can hardly escape when they take upon them to measure the height of the stars. How often, think you, do the physicians lie, when

<sup>1</sup> beg the question.

they aver things good for sicknesses, which afterwards send Charon a great number of souls drowned in a potion before they come to his ferry ? And no less of the rest which take upon them to affirm. Now, for the poet, he nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth. For, as I take it, to lie is to affirm that to be true which is false ; so as the other artists, and especially the historian, affirming many things, can, in the cloudy knowledge of mankind, hardly escape from many lies. But the poet, as I said before, never affirmeth. The poet never maketh any circles about your imagination, to conjure you to believe for true what he writeth. He citeth not authorities of other histories, but even for his entry calleth the sweet Muses to inspire into him a good invention ; in troth, not labouring to tell you what is or is not, but what should or should not be. And therefore, though he recount things not true, yet because he telleth them not for true, he lieth not ; without we will say that Nathan lied in his speech, before alleged, to David ; which, as a wicked man durst scarce say, so think I none so simple would say that Aesop lied in the tales of his beasts ; for who thinketh that Aesop wrote it for actually true, were well worthy to have his name chronicled among the beasts he writeth of. What child is there that, coming to a play, and seeing Thebes written in great letters upon an old door, doth believe that it is Thebes ? If then a man can arrive, at that child's-age, to know that the poet's persons and doings are but pictures what should be, and not stories what have been, they will never give the lie to things not affirmatively, but allegorically and figuratively written. And therefore, as in history looking for truth, they may go away full-fraught with falsehood, so in poesy looking for fiction, they shall use the narration but as an imaginative ground-plot of a profitable invention. But hereto is replied that the poets give names to men they write of, which argueth a conceit of an actual truth, and so, not being true, proveth a falsehood. And doth the lawyer lie then, when, under the names of John a Stile, and John a Noakes, he putteth his

case? But that is easily answered. Their naming of men is but to make their picture the more lively, and not to build any history. Painting men, they cannot leave men nameless. We see we cannot play at chess but that we must give names to our chess-men; and yet, me thinks, he were a very partial champion of truth that would say we lied for giving a piece of wood the reverend title of a bishop. The poet nameth Cyrus and Aeneas no other way than to show what men of their fames, fortunes, and estates should do.

Their third is, how much it abuseth men's wit, training it to wanton sinfulness and lustful love. For indeed that is the principal, if not the only, abuse I can hear alleged. They say the comedies rather teach than reprehend amorous conceits. They say the lyric is larded with passionate sonnets, the elegiac weeps the want of his mistress, and that even to the heroical Cupid hath ambitiously climbed. Alas! Love, I would thou couldst as well defend thyself as thou canst offend others! I would those on whom thou dost attend could either put thee away, or yield good reason why they keep thee! But grant love of beauty to be a beastly fault, (although it be very hard, sith only man, and no beast, hath that gift to discern beauty); grant that lovely name of Love to deserve all hateful reproaches, (although even some of my masters the philosophers spent a good deal of their lamp-oil in setting forth the excellency of it): grant, I say, whatsoever they will have granted,—that not only love, but lust, but vanity, but, (if they list,) scurrility, possesseth many leaves of the poets' books; yet think I, when this is granted, they will find their sentence may with good manners put the last words foremost, and not say that poetry abuseth man's wit, but that man's wit abuseth poetry. For I will not deny, but that man's wit may make poesy, (which should be *eikastikē*, which some learned have defined, figuring forth good things), to be *phantastikē*, which doth contrariwise infect the fancy with unworthy objects; as the painter that should give to the eye either some excellent perspective, or some fine

picture fit for building or fortification, or containing in it some notable example, as Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac, Judith killing Holofernes, David fighting with Goliath, may leave those, and please an ill-pleased eye with wanton shows of better-hidden matters. But what! shall the abuse of a thing make the right use odious? Nay, truly, though I yield that poesy may not only be abused, but that being abused, by the reason of his sweet charming force, it can do more hurt than any other army of words, yet shall it be so far from concluding that the abuse should give reproach to the abused, that contrariwise it is a good reason, that whatsoever, being abused, doth most harm, being rightly used—and upon the right use each thing receiveth his title—doth most good. Do we not see the skill of physick, (the best rampire to our often-assaulted bodies,) being abused, teach poison, the most violent destroyer? Doth not knowledge of law, whose end is to even and right all things, being abused, grow the crooked fosterer of horrible injuries? Doth not, (to go to the highest,) God's word abused, breed heresy; and his Name abused, become blasphemy? Truly a needle cannot do much hurt, and as truly (with leave of ladies be it spoken,) it cannot do much good. With a sword thou mayst kill thy father, and with a sword thou mayst defend thy prince and country. So that, as in their calling poets the fathers of lies they say nothing, so in this their argument of abuse they prove the commendation.

They allege herewith, that before poets began to be in price our nation hath set their hearts' delight upon action, and not upon imagination; rather doing things worthy to be written, than writing things fit to be done. What that before-time was, I think scarcely Sphinx can tell; sith no memory is so ancient that hath the precedence of poetry. And certain it is that, in our plainest homeliness, yet never was the Albion nation without poetry. Marry, this argument, though it be levelled against poetry, yet is it indeed a chain-shot against all learning, or bookishness, as they commonly

term it. Of such mind were certain Goths, of whom it is written that, having in the spoil of a famous city taken a fair library, one hangman (belike fit to execute the fruits of their wits) who had murdered a great number of bodies, would have set fire on it. "No," said another very gravely, "take heed what you do; for while they are busy about these toys, we shall with more leisure conquer their countries." This, indeed, is the ordinary doctrine of ignorance, and many words sometimes I have heard spent in it; but because this reason is generally against all learning, as well as poetry, or rather all learning but poetry; because it were too large a digression to handle, or at least too superfluous, (sith it is manifest that all government of action is to be gotten by knowledge, and knowledge best by gathering many knowledges, which is reading;) I only, with Horace, to him that is of that opinion

Jubeo stultum esse libenter; <sup>1</sup>

for as for poetry itself, it is the freest from this objection, for poetry is the companion of the camps. I dare undertake, Orlando Furioso or honest King Arthur will never displease a soldier; but the quiddity of *ens*, and *prima materia*, will hardly agree with a corselet. And therefore, as I said in the beginning, even Turks and Tartars are delighted with poets. Homer, a Greek, flourished before Greece flourished; and if to a slight conjecture a conjecture may be opposed, truly it may seem, that as by him their learned men took almost their first light of knowledge, so their active men received their first motions of courage. Only Alexander's example may serve, who by Plutarch is accounted of such virtue, that Fortune was not his guide but his footstool; whose acts speak for him, though Plutarch did not; indeed the phoenix of warlike princes. This Alexander left his schoolmaster, living Aristotle, behind him, but took dead Homer with him. He put the philosopher Callisthenes to death, for his seeming philosophical, indeed mutinous, stubbornness; but the chief

<sup>1</sup> I give him free leave to be foolish. SAT. I. i. 63 (adapted).

thing he was ever heard to wish for was that Homer had been alive. He well found he received more bravery of mind by the pattern of Achilles, than by hearing the definition of fortitude. And therefore if Cato misliked Fulvius for carrying Ennius with him to the field, it may be answered that if Cato misliked it, the noble Fulvius liked it, or else he had not done it. For it was not the excellent Cato Uticensis, (whose authority I would much more have revered;) but it was the former, in truth a bitter punisher of faults, but else a man that had never well sacrificed to the Graces. He misliked and cried out upon all Greek learning; and yet, being four-score years old, began to learn it, belike fearing that Pluto understood not Latin. Indeed, the Roman laws allowed no person to be carried to the wars but he that was in the soldiers' roll. And therefore though Cato misliked his unmustered person, he misliked not his work. And if he had, Scipio Nasica, judged by common consent the best Roman, loved him. Both the other Scipio brothers, who had by their virtues no less surnames than of Asia and Afric, so loved him that they caused his body to be buried in their sepulchre. So as Cato his authority being but against his person, and that answered with so far greater than himself, is herein of no validity.

But now, indeed, my burthen is great, that Plato his name (XIII) is laid upon me, whom, I must confess, of all philosophers I have ever esteemed most worthy of reverence; and with great reason, sith of all philosophers he is the most poetical. Yet if he will defile the fountain out of which his flowing streams have proceeded, let us boldly examine with what reasons he did it.

First, truly, a man might maliciously object that Plato, being a philosopher, was a natural enemy of poets. For, indeed, after the philosophers had picked out of the sweet mysteries of poetry the right discerning true points of knowledge, they forthwith, putting it in method, and making a school-art of that which the poets did only teach by a divine

delightfulness, beginning to spurn at their guides, like ungrateful prentices were not content to set up shops for themselves, but sought by all means to discredit their masters ; which by the force of delight being barred them, the less they could overthrow them the more they hated them. For, indeed, they found for Homer seven cities strave who should have him for their citizen ; where many cities banished philosophers, as not fit members to live among them. For only repeating certain of Euripides' verses, many Athenians had their lives saved of the Syracusans, when the Athenians themselves thought many philosophers unworthy to live. Certain poets as Simonides and Pindar, had so prevailed with Hiero the First, that of a tyrant they made him a just king ; where Plato could do so little with Dionysius, that he himself of a philosopher was made a slave. But who should do thus, I confess, should requite the objections made against poets with like cavillations against philosophers ; as likewise one should do that should bid one read Phaedrus or Symposium in Plato, or the Discourse of Love in Plutarch, and see whether any poet do authorize abominable filthiness, as they do.

Again, a man might ask out of what commonwealth Plato did banish them. In sooth, thence where he himself alloweth community of women. So as belike this banishment grew not for effeminate wantonness, sith little should poetical sonnets be hurtful when a man might have what woman he listed. But I honour philosophical instructions, and bless the wits which bred them, so as they be not abused, which is likewise stretched to poetry. Saint Paul himself, who yet, for the credit of poets, allegeth twice two poets, and one of them by the name of a prophet, setteth a watchword upon philosophy,—indeed upon the abuse. So doth Plato upon the abuse, not upon poetry. Plato found fault that the poets of his time filled the world with wrong opinions of the gods, making light tales of that unspotted essence, and therefore would not have the youth depraved with such opinions. Herein may much be said ; let this suffice : the poets did not



induce such opinions, but did imitate those opinions already induced. For all the Greek stories can well testify that the very religion of that time stood upon many and many-fashioned gods; not taught so by the poets, but followed according to their nature of imitation. Who list may read in Plutarch the discourses of Isis and Osiris, of the cause why Oracles ceased, of the Divine Providence, and see whether the theology of that nation stood not upon such dreams, which the poets indeed superstitiously observed; and truly, (sith they had not the light of Christ,) did much better in it than the philosophers, who, shaking off superstition, brought in atheism.

Plato therefore, (whose authority I had much rather justly construe than unjustly resist,) meant not in general of poets, in those words of which Julius Scaliger saith, *Qua auctoritate barbari quidam atque hispidi abuti velint ad poetas e republica exigendos*; <sup>1</sup> but only meant to drive out those wrong opinions of the Deity, (whereof now, without further law, Christianity hath taken away all the hurtful belief,) perchance, (as he thought,) nourished by the then esteemed poets. And a man need go no further than to Plato himself to know his meaning; who, in his dialogue called *Ion*, giveth high and rightly divine commendation unto poetry. So as Plato, banishing the abuse, not the thing, not banishing it, but giving due honour unto it, shall be our patron and not our adversary. For, indeed, I had much rather, (sith truly I may do it,) show their mistaking of Plato, under whose lion's skin they would make an ass-like braying against poesy, than go about to overthrow his authority; whom, the wiser a man is, the more just cause he shall find to have in admiration; especially since he attributeth unto poesy more than myself do, namely to be a very inspiring of a divine force, far above man's wit as in the aforementioned dialogue is apparent.

Of the other side, who would show the honours have been

<sup>1</sup> And this authority certain uncouth and barbarous writers would like to misuse for the purpose of driving poets out of the republic. SCALIGER, *Poetics*, 5. a. 1.

by the best sort of judgments granted them, a whole sea of examples would present themselves: Alexanders, Caesars, Scipios, all favourers of poets; Laelius, called the Roman Socrates, himself a poet, so as part of Heautontimoroumenos in Terence was supposed to be made by him. And even the Greek Socrates, whom Apollo confirmed to be the only wise man, is said to have spent part of his old time in putting Aesop's Fables into verses; and therefore full evil should it become his scholar, Plato, to put such words in his master's mouth against poets. But what needs more? Aristotle writes the Art of Poesy; and why, if it should not be written? Plutarch teacheth the use to be gathered of them; and how, if they should not be read? And who reads Plutarch's either history or philosophy, shall find he trimmeth both their garments with guards of poesy. But I list not to defend poesy with the help of her underling historiography. Let it suffice that it is a fit soil for praise to dwell upon; and what dispraise may set upon it, is either easily overcome, or transformed into just commendation.

So that, sith the excellencies of it may be so easily and so justly confirmed, and the low-creeping objections so soon trodden down: it not being an art of lies, but of true doctrine; not of effeminateness, but of notable stirring of courage; not of abusing man's wit, but of strengthening man's wit; not banished, but honoured by Plato; let us rather plant more laurels for to engarland our poets' heads (which honour of being laureate, as besides them only triumphant captains were, is a sufficient authority to show the price they ought to be held in) than suffer the ill-savoured breath of such wrong speakers once to blow upon the clear springs of poesy.

(XIV) But sith I have run so long a career in this matter, me thinks, before I give my pen a full stop, it shall be but a little more lost time to inquire why England, the mother of excellent minds, should be grown so hard a stepmother to poets, who certainly in wit ought to pass all others, sith all only

proceedeth from their wit, being indeed makers of themselves, not takers of others. How can I but exclaim,

Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso ?<sup>1</sup>

Sweet poesy ! that hath anciently had kings, emperors, senators, great captains, such as, besides a thousand others, David, Adrian, Sophocles, Germanicus, not only to favour poets, but to be poets ; and of our nearer times can present for her patrons a Robert, King of Sicily ; the great King Francis of France ; King James of Scotland ; such cardinals as Bembus and Bibbiena ; such famous preachers and teachers as Beza and Melancthon ; so learned philosophers as Fracastorius and Scaliger ; so great orators as Pontanus and Muretus ; so piercing wits as George Buchanan ; so grave counsellors as, besides many, but before all, that Hospital of France, than whom, I think, that realm never brought forth a more accomplished judgment more firmly builded upon virtue ; I say these, with numbers of others, not only to read others' poesies but to poetize for others' reading. That poesy, thus embraced in all other places, should only find in our time a hard welcome in England, I think the very earth lamenteth it, and therefore decketh our soil with fewer laurels than it was accustomed. For heretofore poets have in England also flourished ; and, which is to be noted, even in those times when the trumpet of Mars did sound loudest. And now that an over-faint quietness should seem to strew the house for poets, they are almost in as good reputation as the mountebanks at Venice. Truly even that, as of the one side it giveth great praise to poesy, which, like Venus (but to better purpose,) hath rather be troubled in the net with Mars, than enjoy the homely quiet of Vulcan ; so serves it for a piece of a reason why they are less grateful to idle England, which now can scarce endure the pain of a pen. Upon this necessarily followeth, that base men with servile wits undertake it, who think it enough if they can be rewarded of the printer. And

<sup>1</sup> "O Muse, tell me, for what injury to her god-head. . . ." VIRGIL, *Aeneid*, i. 12.

so as Epaminondas is said, with the honour of his virtue to have made an office, by his exercising it, which before was contemptible, to become highly respected ; so these men, no more but setting their names to it, by their own disgracefulness disgrace the most graceful poesy. For now, without any commission, they do post over the banks of Helicon, till they make the readers more weary than post-horses ; while, in the mean time, they,

Queis meliore luto finxit praeordia Titan,<sup>1</sup>

are better content to suppress the outflowing of their wit than, by publishing them, to be accounted knights of the same order.

But I that, before ever I durst aspire unto the dignity, am admitted into the company of the paper-blurrers, do find the very true cause of our wanting estimation is want of desert, taking upon us to be poets in despite of Pallas. Now wherein we want desert were a thankworthy labour to express ; but if I knew, I should have mended myself. But I, as I never desired the title, so have I neglected the means to come by it ; only, overmastered by some thoughts, I yielded an inky tribute unto them. Marry, they that delight in poesy itself should seek to know what they do and how they do ; and especially look themselves in an unflattering glass of reason, if they be inclinable unto it. For poesy must not be drawn by the ears, it must be gently led, or rather it must lead ; which was partly the cause that made the ancient learned affirm it was a divine gift, and no human skill, sith all other knowledges lie ready for any that hath strength of wit ; a poet no industry can make if his own genius be not carried unto it. And therefore is it an old proverb : *Orator fit, poeta nascitur*.<sup>2</sup> Yet confess I always that, as the fertilest ground must be manured, so must the highest-flying wit have a Daedalus to guide him. That Daedalus, they say,

<sup>1</sup> Whose hearts the Titan moulded of a nobler clay. JUVENAL, xiv. 34-5 (adapted).

<sup>2</sup> The orator is made, the poet born.

both in this and in other, hath three wings to bear itself up into the air of due commendation : that is, art, imitation, and exercise. But these, neither artificial rules nor imitative patterns, we much cumber ourselves withal. Exercise indeed we do, but that very fore-backwardly, for where we should exercise to know, we exercise as having known ; and so is our brain delivered of much matter which never was begotten by knowledge. For, there being two principal parts, matter to be expressed by words, and words to express the matter, in neither we use art or imitation rightly. Our matter is *quodlibet*<sup>1</sup> indeed, though wrongly performing Ovid's verse,

Quicquid conabar dicere, versus erat ;<sup>2</sup>

never marshallling it into any assured rank, that almost the readers cannot tell where to find themselves.

Chaucer, undoubtedly, did excellently in his *Troylus and Cresseid* ; of whom, truly, I know not whether to marvel more, either that he in that misty time could see so clearly, or that we in this clear age walk so stumblingly after him. Yet had he great wants, fit to be forgiven in so reverend antiquity. I account the *Mirroure of Magistrates* meetly furnished of beautiful parts ; and in the Earl of Surrey's *Lyrics* many things tasting of a noble birth, and worthy of a noble mind. The *Sheapheard's Kalender* hath much poetry in his eclogues, indeed worthy the reading, if I be not deceived. That same framing of his style to an old rustic language I dare not allow, since neither Theocritus in Greek, Virgil in Latin, nor Sannazzaro in Italian did affect it. Besides these, I do not remember to have seen but few (to speak boldly) printed, that have poetical sinews in them ; for proof whereof, let but most of the verses be put in prose, and then ask the meaning, and it will be found that one verse did but beget another, without ordering at the first what should be at the last ; which becomes a confused mass of words, with a tinkling sound of rime, barely accompanied with reason.

<sup>1</sup> what you please.

<sup>2</sup> Whatever I tried to say became verse. OVID, *Tristia*, IV. x. 26.

Our tragedies and comedies not without cause cried out against, observing rules neither of honest civility nor of skilful poetry: excepting *Gorboduck*, (again I say of those that I have seen,) which notwithstanding as it is full of stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca his style, and as full of notable morality, which it doth most delightfully teach, and so obtain the very end of poesy; yet in truth it is very defectious in the circumstances; which grieveth me, because it might not remain as an exact model of all tragedies. For it is faulty both in place and time, the two necessary companions of all corporal actions. For where the stage should always represent but one place, and the uttermost time presupposed in it should be, both by Aristotle's precept and common reason, but one day, there is both many days and many places inartificially imagined.

But if it be so in *Gorboduck*, how much more in all the rest? where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Afric of the other, and so many other under-kingdoms, that the player, when he cometh in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now ye shall have three ladies walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By and by we hear news of shipwreck in the same place, and then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. Upon the back of that comes out a hideous monster with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave. While in the mean time two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field?

Now of time they are much more liberal. For ordinary it is that two young princes fall in love; after many traverses she is got with child, delivered of a fair boy, he is lost, groweth a man, falleth in love, and is ready to get another child, and all this in two hours' space; which how absurd it is in sense even sense may imagine, and art hath taught, and all ancient

examples justified, and at this day the ordinary players in Italy will not err in. Yet will some bring in an example of Eunuchus in Terence, that containeth matter of two days, yet far short of twenty years. True it is, and so was it to be played in two days, and so fitted to the time it set forth. And though Plautus have in one place done amiss, let us hit with him, and not miss with him. But they will say, How then shall we set forth a story which containeth both many places and many times? And do they not know that a tragedy is tied to the laws of poesy, and not of history; not bound to follow the story, but having liberty either to feign a quite new matter, or to frame the history to the most tragical conveniency? Again, many things may be told which cannot be showed, if they know the difference betwixt reporting and representing. As for example I may speak, (though I am here,) of Peru, and in speech digress from that to the description of Calicut; but in action I cannot represent it without Pacolet's horse. And so was the manner the ancients took, by some *Nuntius*<sup>1</sup> to recount things done in former time or other place.

Lastly, if they will represent an history, they must not, (as Horace saith,) begin *ab ovo*,<sup>2</sup> but they must come to the principal point of that one action which they will represent. By example this will be best expressed. I have a story of young Polydorus, delivered for safety's sake, with great riches, by his father Priamus to Polymnestor, King of Thrace, in the Trojan war time. He, after some years, hearing the overthrow of Priamus, for to make the treasure his own murdereth the child; the body of the child is taken up; Hecuba, she, the same day, findeth a sleight to be revenged most cruelly of the tyrant. Where now would one of our tragedy-writers begin, but with the delivery of the child? Then should he sail over into Thrace, and so spend I know not how many years, and travel numbers of places. But where doth Euripides? Even with the finding of the body, leaving the rest

<sup>1</sup> messenger.

<sup>2</sup> from the egg. HORACE, *Sat.* V. iii. 6.

to be told by the spirit of Polydorus. This needs no further to be enlarged ; the dullest wit may conceive it.

But, besides these gross absurdities, how all their plays be neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in the clown by head and shoulders to play a part in majestic matters, with neither decency nor discretion ; so as neither the admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by their mongrel tragi-comedy obtained. I know Apuleius did somewhat so, but that is a thing recounted with space of time, not represented in one moment ; and I know the ancients have one or two examples of tragi-comedies, as Plautus hath *Amphitryo*. But, if we mark them well, we shall find that they never, or very daintily, match hornpipes and funerals. So falleth it out that, having indeed no right comedy in that comical part of our tragedy, we have nothing but scurrility, unworthy of any chaste ears, or some extreme show of doltishness, indeed fit to lift up a loud laughter, and nothing else ; where the whole tract of a comedy should be full of delight, as the tragedy should be still maintained in a well-raised admiration.

But our comedians think there is no delight without laughter, which is very wrong ; for though laughter may come with delight, yet cometh it not of delight, as though delight should be the cause of laughter ; but well may one thing breed both together. Nay, rather in themselves they have, as it were, a kind of contrariety. For delight we scarcely do, but in things that have a conveniency to ourselves, or to the general nature ; laughter almost ever cometh of things most disproportioned to ourselves and nature. Delight hath a joy in it either permanent or present ; laughter hath only a scornful tickling. For example, we are ravished with delight to see a fair woman, and yet are far from being moved to laughter. We laugh at deformed creatures, wherein certainly we cannot delight. We delight in good chances, we laugh at mischances. We delight to hear the happiness



of our friends and country, at which he were worthy to be laughed at that would laugh. We shall, contrarily, laugh sometimes to find a matter quite mistaken and go down the hill against the bias, in the mouth of some such men, as for the respect of them one shall be heartily sorry, yet he cannot choose but laugh, and so is rather pained than delighted with laughter. Yet deny I not but that they may go well together. For as in Alexander's picture well set out we delight without laughter, and in twenty mad antics we laugh without delight ; so in Hercules, painted, with his great beard and furious countenance, in woman's attire, spinning at Omphale's commandment, it breedeth both delight and laughter ; for the representing of so strange a power in love procureth delight, and the scornfulness of the action stirreth laughter.

But I speak to this purpose, that all the end of the comical part be not upon such scornful matters as stir laughter only, but mixed with it that delightful teaching which is the end of poesy. And the great fault, even in that point of laughter, and forbidden plainly by Aristotle, is that they stir laughter in sinful things, which are rather execrable than ridiculous ; or in miserable, which are rather to be pitied than scorned. For what is it to make folks gape at a wretched beggar or a beggarly clown, or, against law of hospitality, to jest at strangers because they speak not English as well as we do ? what do we learn ? since it is certain :

Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se,  
Quam quod ridiculos homines facit.<sup>1</sup>

But rather a busy loving courtier ; a heartless threatening Thraso ; a self-wise-seeming schoolmaster ; a wry-transformed traveller : these if we saw walk in stage-names, which we play naturally, therein were delightful laughter and teaching delightfulness, as in the other, the tragedies of Buchanan do justly bring forth a divine admiration.

But I have lavished out too many words of this play-matter.

<sup>1</sup> Luckless poverty involves no greater hardship than this, that it makes a man ridiculous. JUVENAL, *Sat.* iii. 152-3.

I do it, because, as they are excelling parts of poesy, so is there none so much used in England, and none can be more pitifully abused ; which, like an unmannerly daughter, showing a bad education, causeth her mother Poesy's honesty to be called in question.

Other sorts of poetry almost have we none, but that lyrical kind of songs and sonnets, which, Lord, if he gave us so good minds, how well it might be employed, and with how heavenly fruit both private and public, in singing the praises of the immortal beauty, the immortal goodness of that God who giveth us hands to write, and wits to conceive !—of which we might well want words, but never matter ; of which we could turn our eyes to nothing, but we should ever have new-budding occasions.

But truly, many of such writings as come under the banner of irresistible love, if I were a mistress would never persuade me they were in love ; so coldly they apply fiery speeches, as men that had rather read lovers' writings, (and so caught up certain swelling phrases, which hang together like a man which once told me the wind was at north-west and by south, because he would be sure to name winds enough) than that in truth they feel those passions ; which easily, as I think, may be bewrayed by that same forcibleness, or *energeia* (as the Greeks call it) of the writer. But let this be a sufficient, though short note, that we miss the right use of the material point of poesy.

(XVI) Now for the outside of it, which is words, or (as I may term it) diction, it is even well worse ; so is that honey-flowing matron, Eloquence, apparelled, or rather disguised, in a courtesan-like painted affection : one time with so far-fetched words, they may seem monsters, but must seem strangers, to any poor Englishman ; another time with coursing of a letter, as if they were bound to follow the method of a dictionary ; another time with figures and flowers extremely winter-starved.

But I would this fault were only peculiar to versifiers, and

had not as large possession among prose-printers, and, (which is to be marvelled,) among many scholars, and, (which is to be pitied,) among some preachers. Truly I could wish—if at least I might be so bold to wish in a thing beyond the reach of my capacity—the diligent imitators of Tully and Demosthenes (most worthy to be imitated) did not so much keep Nizolian paper-books of their figures and phrases, as by attentive translation, as it were, devour them whole, and make them wholly theirs. For now they cast sugar and spice upon every dish that is served to the table; like those Indians, not content to wear ear-rings at the fit and natural place of the ears, but they will thrust jewels through their nose and lips, because they will be sure to be fine. Tully, when he was to drive out Catiline as it were with a thunderbolt of eloquence, often used that figure of repetition, as *Vivit. Vivit? Immo in senatum venit*,<sup>1</sup> etc. Indeed, inflamed with a well-grounded rage, he would have his words, as it were, double out of his mouth; and so do that artificially, which we see men in choler do naturally. And we, having noted the grace of those words, hale them in sometime to a familiar epistle, when it were too much choler to be cholerick. How well store of *similiter cadences* doth sound with the gravity of the pulpit, I would but invoke Demosthenes' soul to tell, who with a rare daintiness useth them. Truly they have made me think of the sophister that with too much subtilty would prove two eggs three, and though he might be counted a sophister, had none for his labour. So these men bringing in such a kind of eloquence, well may they obtain an opinion of a seeming fineness, but persuade few, which should be the end of their fineness.

Now for similitudes, in certain printed discourses, I think all herbarists, all stories of beasts, fowls, and fishes are rifled up, that they may come in multitudes to wait upon any of our conceits, which certainly is as absurd a surfeit to the ears

<sup>1</sup> He lives. Lives (do I say)? Nay, even comes into the senate. CICERO, *Cat.* i. 2.

as is possible. For the force of a similitude not being to prove any thing to a contrary disputer, but only to explain to a willing hearer ; when that is done, the rest is a most tedious prattling, rather overswaying the memory from the purpose whereto they were applied, than any whit informing the judgment, already either satisfied or by similitudes not to be satisfied.

For my part, I do not doubt, when Antonius and Crassus, the great forefathers of Cicero in eloquence, the one (as Cicero testifieth of them) pretended not to know art, the other not to set by it, because with a plain sensibleness they might win credit of popular ears, which credit is the nearest step to persuasion, which persuasion is the chief mark of oratory,—I do not doubt, I say, but that they used these knacks very sparingly ; which who doth generally use any man may see doth dance to his own music, and so be noted by the audience more careful to speak curiously than to speak truly. Undoubtedly (at least to my opinion undoubtedly) I have found in divers small-learned courtiers a more sound style than in some professors of learning ; of which I can guess no other cause, but that the courtier following that which by practice he findeth fittest to nature, therein, though he know it not, doth according to art, though not by art ; where the other, using art to show art and not to hide art (as in these cases he should do) flieth from nature, and indeed abuseth art.

(XVII) But what ! me thinks I deserve to be pounded for straying from poetry to oratory. But both have such an affinity in this wordish consideration, that I think this digression will make my meaning receive the fuller understanding : which is not to take upon me to teach poets how they should do, but only, finding myself sick among the rest, to show some one or two spots of the common infection grown among the most part of writers ; that, acknowledging ourselves somewhat awry, we may bend to the right use both of matter and manner : whereto our language giveth us great occasion, being, indeed, capable of any excellent exercising of it.

I know some will say it is a mingled language. And why not so much the better, taking the best of both the other? Another will say it wanteth grammar. Nay, truly, it hath that praise that it wanteth not grammar: for grammar it might have, but it needs it not; being so easy in itself, and so void of those cumbersome differences of cases, genders, moods, and tenses, which, I think, was a piece of the Tower of Babylon's curse, that a man should be put to school to learn his mother-tongue. But for the uttering sweetly and properly the conceits of the mind, which is the end of speech, that hath it equally with any other tongue in the world; and is particularly happy in compositions of two or three words together,—near the Greek, far beyond the Latin, which is one of the greatest beauties can be in a language.

Now of versifying there are two sorts, the one ancient, the other modern. The ancient marked the quantity of each syllable, and according to that framed his verse; the modern observing only number, with some regard of the accent, the chief life of it standeth in that like sounding of the words, which we call rhyme. Whether of these be the more excellent would bear many speeches; the ancient no doubt more fit for music, both words and tune observing quantity; and more fit lively to express divers passions, by the low or lofty sound of the well-weighed syllable. The latter likewise with his rhyme striketh a certain music to the ear; and, in fine, sith it doth delight, though by another way, it obtaineth the same purpose; there being in either, sweetness, and wanting in neither, majesty. Truly the English, before any other vulgar language I know, is fit for both sorts. For, for the ancient, the Italian is so full of vowels that it must ever be cumbered with elisions; the Dutch so, of the other side, with consonants, that they cannot yield the sweet sliding fit for a verse. The French in his whole language hath not one word that hath his accent in the last syllable saving two, called antepenultima, and little more hath the Spanish; and therefore very gracelessly may they use dactyls. The English

is subject to none of these defects. Now for rhyme, though we do not observe quantity, yet we observe the accent very precisely, which other languages either cannot do, or will not do so absolutely. That caesura, or breathing-place in the midst of the verse, neither Italian nor Spanish have, the French and we never almost fail of.

Lastly, even the very rhyme itself the Italian cannot put in the last syllable, by the French named the masculine rhyme, but still in the next to the last, which the French call the female, or the next before that, which the Italians term *sdrucchiola*. The example of the former is *buono, suono*; of the *sdrucchiola* is *femina, semina*. The French, of the other side, hath both the male as *bon, son*; and the female, as *plaise, taise*; but the *sdrucchiola* he hath not. Where the English hath all three, as *due, true*; *father, rather*; *motion, potion*; with much more which might be said, but that already I find the triflingness of this discourse is much too much enlarged.

(XVIII) So that sith the ever praiseworthy poesy is full of virtue-breeding delightfulness, and void of no gift that ought to be in the noble name of learning; sith the blames laid against it are either false or feeble; sith the cause why it is not esteemed in England is the fault of poet-apes, not poets; sith, lastly, our tongue is most fit to honour poesy, and to be honoured by poesy; I conjure you all that have had the evil luck to read this ink-wasting toy of mine, even in the name of the Nine Muses, no more to scorn the sacred mysteries of poesy; no more to laugh at the name of Poets, as though they were next inheritors to Fools; no more to jest at the reverend title of "a rhymers"; but to believe, with Aristotle, that they were the ancient treasurers of the Grecians' divinity; to believe, with Bembo, that they were first bringers-in of all civility; to believe, with Scaliger, that no philosopher's precepts can sooner make you an honest man than the reading of Virgil; to believe, with Clauserus, the translator of Cornutus, that it pleased the Heavenly Deity by Hesiod and Homer,

under the veil of fables, to give us all knowledge, logic, rhetoric, philosophy natural and moral, and *quid non* ? to believe, with me, that there are many mysteries contained in poetry which of purpose were written darkly, lest by profane wits it should be abused ; to believe, with Landino, that they are so beloved of the gods, that whatsoever they write proceeds of a divine fury ; lastly, to believe themselves, when they tell you they will make you immortal by their verses.

Thus doing, your name shall flourish in the printers' shops. Thus doing, you shall be of kin to many a poetical preface. Thus doing, you shall be most fair, most rich, most wise, most all ; you shall dwell upon superlatives. Thus doing, though you be *libertino patre natus*,<sup>1</sup> you shall suddenly grow *Herculea proles*,<sup>2</sup>

Si quid mea carmina possunt.<sup>3</sup>

Thus doing, your soul shall be placed with Dante's Beatrice or Virgil's Anchises.

But if—fie of such a but !—you be born so near the dull-making cataract of Nilus, that you cannot hear the planet-like music of poetry ; if you have so earth-creeeping a mind that it cannot lift itself up to look to the sky of poetry, or rather, by a certain rustical disdain, will become such a mome as to be a Momus of poetry ; then, though I will not wish unto you the ass's ears of Midas, nor to be driven by a poet's verses, as Bubonax was, to hang himself ; nor to be rhymed to death, as is said to be done in Ireland ; yet thus much curse I must send you in the behalf of all poets : that while you live you live in love, and never get favour, for lacking skill of a sonnet ; and when you die, your memory die from the earth, for want of an epitaph.

<sup>1</sup> born with a freedman for your father. HORACE, *Sat.* I. vi. 6.

<sup>2</sup> a child of the house of Hercules.

<sup>3</sup> if aught my verses can do. VIRGIL, *Aeneid*, ix. 446.

## NOTES

- P. 1. Edward Wotton and I were at the Emperor's court together :  
at the Court of Maximilian II. in Vienna, A.D. 1573.  
2. sith : since.

### II

pitiful : inspired by pity.

the former, *i.e.* learning.

the silly latter, *i.e.* poetry. (*Silly* is used with its older meaning, *simple*).

3. Livius Andronicus : a Greek who, released from slavery, made Latin translations of Greek plays. He lived in the third century B.C. [Distinguish from the historian *Livius* (*Livy*), who was a contemporary of Augustus.]

Boccace : Giovanni Boccaccio, an Italian poet of the fourteenth century whose works had an important influence, notably on Chaucer and Shakespeare. His most famous work is a series of romantic tales called the *Decameron*.

Gower, John : The best of the English poets contemporary with Chaucer. He wrote books in French and in Latin and the *Confessio Amantis*, a poem in English. Died 1408.

Plato wrote his philosophic enquiries in the form of imaginary dialogues, thus borrowing an element of "feigning" from the poets.

Gyges : a character in a story of magic told in Plato's *Republic*, Book II.

4. areytos : dance accompanied by song. A Spanish version of the Indian word.

### III

5. whereupon grew : "from which arose the phrase, *Virgilian Oracles*."

Albinus, Clodius : A Roman general who commanded troops (but did not actually govern) in Britain. Killed in battle, 197 A.D.



charms derived of *carmina*: *Carmen* (Latin) means a chant or enchantment. Wizards of all times have used rhythmic chants and movements to induce a hypnotic state.

**conceit**: conception, imagination.

**prosopopoeias**: a poetic image attributing human form to that which is spiritual or inanimate.

7. **metaphysic**: metaphysician.

**within the zodiac**: within the appointed heavenly path. The zodiac is an imaginary belt in the heavens.

**Fylades**: the friend of Orestes who accompanied him through all his terrible wanderings. He appears in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* of Euripides.

**Orlando**: Orlando Furioso, the hero of a long poem by the Italian Ariosto. Died 1533 A.D.

**fore-conceit**: original conception; first imagining.

#### IV

8. **Aristotle**: the great Greek philosopher, pupil of Plato and tutor of Alexander the Great. He wrote on an extraordinary range of subjects, philosophical, scientific, and critical. Sidney quotes chiefly from the *Poetics*, in which he analysed the practice of the great poets of Greece and maintained the "serious and profound" nature of poetry. Died B.C. 322.

**Emanuel Tremellius**: a learned Jew, converted to Christianity, who taught Hebrew and made a Latin translation of the Bible with Fr. Junius. Died A.D. 1580.

**Franciscus Junius**: a French scholar, professor of Philosophy in several German universities. (See above: *Tremellius*.)

**St. James his counsel**: "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." *Epistle*, 5, 13. (Note the old possessive form with "his.")

9. **Cato**: Dionysius Cato, whose moral aphorisms were extremely popular in the Middle Ages, and were published as a school book by Erasmus. Nothing is known of the author except that he probably lived before 300 A.D.

**Manilius**: a Roman poet of the time of Augustus. His poem is called *Astronomica*.

10. **iambic, elegiac, etc.** See note in Section IX.

**Heliodorus**: a native of Syria in the fourth century A.D.; author of a romance called *Aethiopica*, which told, in ten books, of the loves of Theagenes and Chariclea. He became Bishop of Tricca in Thessaly.

- P. 10. sugared invention : "sweet" or "pleasant" invention. Cf. Mere's reference in *Palladis Tamia* to Shakespeare's "sugared sonnets."

peizing : weighing out.

## V

anatomies : analyses ; results of dissection and examination.

11. conceit : imagination ; power of conceiving ideas and images.  
in the ethic and politic consideration : whether we consider abstract virtue or practical, worldly wisdom.
12. sophistically speaking against subtilty : *i.e.* speaking subtly, like Sophists, who loved argument more than truth. This phrase and the next are examples of *oxymoron*, a turn of speech containing an apparent contradiction in terms.  
casting largess : scattering alms.
13. conferring : literally, *bringing together*.

Brutus : Marcus Brutus, who slew Julius Caesar in the hope of freeing Rome from tyranny, was a profound student of history and philosophy.

## VI

moderator : arbitrator, person in authority.

14. conceit : imagination.
15. Tully : Cicero.  
genus and difference : class and distinguishing characteristics.  
the two Theban brothers : Eteoclēs and Polyneicēs, sons of Oedipus. Their quarrel forms the subject of a play by Euripides, the *Phoenissae*.  
Gnatho : a parasite in Terence.
16. moral commonplaces : famous sayings, such as were frequently quoted by orators and found in all books of quotations, were called "commonplaces." It was not until later that the word denoted "dull and hackneyed observations."

## VII

17. Aristotle : see note in Section IV. In the passage referred to he distinguishes between history and poetry thus : "The one relates what has been, the other what might be" (*Poetics*).

Justin : an historian who lived in the second century A. D.

Dares Phrygius : the author of a "history" of the Trojan war. He was believed to have been a participant, and Sidney, probably following Scaliger, regards his story as authentic.

foul and ill-favoured : ugly and graceless.

18. **Quintus Curtius** wrote the life of Alexander the Great. then indeed it hath some advantage to a gross conceit: the argument might then seem, to a crude intellect, to possess some force.
19. **virtuous Cato**: the Roman Senator, famous for his oratory and for his virtue. He fought with Pompey against Julius Caesar, and was in command of Utica, in Africa, when it was besieged. He committed suicide rather than be captured, B.C. 46
20. **kennel**: breed.

## VIII

- the laurel crown: the laurel was sacred to Apollo, the god of song, and was woven into wreaths for those victorious in contests of poetry, who were then said to be "laureate" (see p. 40).
21. **natural conceit**: instinctive knowledge.  
**pretending no more**: claiming to do no more.
22. **Aristotle**: see note in Section IV.  
**Amadis de Gaule**: a famous romance written in the fourteenth century in Portugal, and translated into French and English.  
**Boethius**: a Roman statesman and philosopher at the court of Theodoric the Goth. He wrote, during a period of imprisonment, a book on the Consolations of Philosophy. It is in the form of a dialogue and is partly in verse. He was executed A.D. 525.
23. **apparent**: manifest.  
**Platonic**: it is said that Plato inscribed over the door of his Academy: "Let no one enter who has not learned Geometry."  
**Psalm of Mercy**: Psalm 51.

## IX

24. **defections**: defective.  
**Sannazzaro**: an Italian poet, author of the *Arcadia*, a romance in prose and verse which was the source of Sidney's work of the same name. Died 1530 A.D.  
**Meliboeus and Tityrus**: characters in Virgil's first Eclogue.
25. **iambic**: Sidney means the poetry of invective and censure which was written by Greek authors in iambic metre, the metre also used in Greek tragedy.  
**naughtiness**: wickedness; worthlessness.
26. **Demea, Davus, Gnatho, Thraso**: characters in Terence's comedies.  
**Alexander Pheraeus**: tyrant of Pherae. His subjects rebelled against him and were aided by the Thebans. He was killed by his wife, B.C. 367. [Distinguish from Alexander of Macedon, known as "the Great."]

- P. 27. the lyric . . . with his tuned lyre : *lyric* denoted, originally, verse written to be sung to the lyre. Now all poems expressive of a single mood or impulse, except sonnets, are called *lyric*.  
 the old song of Percy and Douglas : the ballad of Chevy Chase.  
 crowder : fiddler. The Welsh fiddle is called a *crwth*.  
 Olympus : S. means Olympia, where the games were held.  
 rests : remains
28. Rinaldo : the hero of Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*.  
 ceremonies : sacred vessels, relics, images, etc.  
 prejudicating humour : tendency to harsh judgment.

## X

29. conceit : idea.

## XI

30. turn : alter, adapt. Ovid's line was *Et lateat vitium proximitate boni*.  
 Agrippa (1486-1533), a philosopher who was suspected of being a magician, wrote a treatise on the Vanity of the Sciences  
 Erasmus wrote a witty book called *The Praise of Folly*.  
 Scaliger, Julius : an Italian physician, author of commentaries on Aristotle and other classical writers and of a philosophical treatise on poetry. Died A.D. 1558.  
 without, perchance, number . . . be in our time grown odious : unless our generation despises number, etc.

## XII

32. the largest field to ear : i.e. to plough. Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, line 28.  
 overshot Robin Hood : achieved something unsurpassable ; found an absolutely quelling argument.  
 Plato : see Section XIII.
33. Charon : the ferryman of the river Styx over which the dead must pass to Hades.  
 the poet never maketh any circles . . . : magicians drew charmed circles with wands about their victims, who within these circles were helpless.  
 John a Stile and John a Noakes : John of the Stile and John of the Oaks ; names which a lawyer would give to imaginary parties in a supposititious case.
34. a very partial champion of truth : one over-zealous in taking truth's part.

**abuseth** : deceives, leads astray.

**amorous conceits** : love-sick fancies.

35. **Judith** : see the book of *Judith* in the Apocrypha.

**rampire** : rampart, defence.

**Albion nation** : England.

36. the quiddity of *ens* and *prima materia* : subtle terms used in abstruse philosophical disputation : *the distinctive quality* of an *essence* and the *primal substance*.

37. **Cato**, the Censor, grandfather of Cato Uticensis. He was of a severe and disciplinary nature, and constantly condemned luxury.

**Pluto** : the lord of the nether world.

**misliked his unmustered person** : objected to a man not on the roll of soldiers being brought on the campaign.

**the other Scipio brothers** : surnamed Africanus and Asiaticus respectively, for their victories over Hannibal in Africa and Antiochus in Asia.

### XIII

**Plato** : see Section II., note. In his *Republic* Plato designs the ideal state for "god-like and god-fearing men." Because Homer tells irreverent stories of the gods, Plato would allow only certain portions of his works to be taught. He would exclude all poetry except "hymns to the god and panegyrics to the good." Plato died B.C. 347.

38. **had their lives saved** : Browning's *Balaustion's Adventure* is founded on this story.

**Saint Paul . . . setteth a watchword** : *Epistle to the Colossians*, 2, 8, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

39. **construe** : interpret.

**Julius Scaliger** : see note in Section XI.

40. **Heautontimoroumenos** : Self-tormentor, the Greek title of a Latin comedy by Terence.

**Apollo** : through his Oracle at Delphi.

**guards** : ornaments

**laureate** : see note in Section VIII.

### XIV

41. **Adrian** (or Hadrian), a famous Roman Emperor, wrote some lines "to his Soul" which have often been translated.

- P. 41. **Germanicus** : an ill-starred relative of the Emperor Tiberius, who commanded against the Germans : he wrote verses.

**Robert, King of Sicily** : Robert II of Anjou, friend of Petrarch and patron of Boccaccio. Died 1348.

**Francis of France**. Francis I, famous as a patron of famous men : Cellini, Leonardo da Vinci, Rabelais, Scaliger and others. Died 1547.

**Bembo** : a great Italian Cardinal, a scholar and a friend to scholars. Author of works in Italian and Latin. Died 1547.

**Beza** : a Swiss divine, a Biblical scholar and writer of some little-known Latin verse. Died 1605.

**Melancthon** : a German scholar, author of a poem on eclipses which is praised by Scaliger. More famous as a religious reformer. Died 1560.

**George Buchanan**, a Scottish poet who studied and taught in France, wrote poems and tragedies in Latin which were much admired. Died 1582.

**Venus** was said to have deserted her lame husband Vulcan because of the superior attractions of Mars, the god of war. Sidney makes an allegory out of this : Poetry, like Love, is attracted by war.

so serves it for a piece of a reason why they are less grateful to idle England : the fact that poetry is full of warlike matter is one reason why poets are less welcome to England in this time of peace.

undertake it : attempt to write poetry.

42. **Helicon** : a mountain in Greece sacred to the Muses. The springs upon it inspired poets, so that Spenser and Sidney speak of it as a stream.

in despite of Pallas : rashly, Pallas Athene being the goddess of wisdom and prudence.

**Daedalus** : when young Icarus and his father Daedalus made themselves wings to fly from Crete, Icarus, ignoring his father's guidance, soared up to the sun. The wax in his wings melted, he fell into the sea and was drowned.

## XV

43. **Troilus and Cresseid** : a long narrative poem by Chaucer, written in seven-line stanzas, much read and imitated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was in the matter of pronunciation and metre that the early Elizabethans "walked stumbingly" after Chaucer.

**Mirroure of Magistrates**: a long didactic poem by various authors, including Thomas Sackville. The first part had been published a few years before Sidney wrote this essay.

**the Earl of Surrey's Lyrics**: most of these were published in Totell's *Miscellany* in 1557. Sidney doubtless owed much to their example.

**the Sheapheard's Kalender**: a pastoral poem in twelve eclogues by Spenser. He dedicated it to Sidney and published it anonymously in 1579 or 1580.

**Sannazzaro**: see note in Section IX.

44. **Gorboduck**: a tragedy in blank verse, the first of its kind in England, by Sackville and Norton; first acted in 1561.

**defectious**: defective.

**Aristotle's precept**: the law of unity of time laid down by Aristotle in his theory of tragedy (*Poetics*, ch. 5).

**inartificially imagined**: arranged without the skilful art required in drama.

**believe the stage to be a garden**: there was no scenery in the Elizabethan theatre and no curtain fell between the acts.

45. **Calicut**: a town of Malabar.

**Pacolet's horse**: a magic steed in the old French romance of *Valentine and Orson*.

**Polydorus**: the story is told in Euripides' play, *Hecuba*.

46. **Apuleius**, author of the *Golden Ass* (*Metamorphoses*). Lived in the second century A.D.

47. **against the bias**: against one's natural inclination. A metaphor from the game of bowls.

## XVI

48. **affection**: affectation.

**coursing of a letter**: "chasing" (repeating) the same initial letter: alliteration.

49. **Tully**: Cicero.

**Nizolian paper-books**: collections of phrases alphabetically arranged such as that made from Cicero by the Italian Nizoli.

**similiter cadences**: phrases containing similar sounds—a kind of rhyme or assonance used in oratory.

**sophister**: a quibbling philosopher. See note in Section V.

**herbarists**: books on herbs and their uses.

**conceits**: fancies; figures of speech.

50. **Antonius**: Marcus Antonius, the avenger of Julius Caesar.

**abuseth art**: misuses art.

## XVII

- P. 50. **pounded**: put into the "pound," an enclosure for strayed beasts.

**this wordish consideration**: this matter of the use of words.

51. **the modern observing only number, with some regard of the accent**. In the metrical law established in England by Chaucer the corresponding lines contain an equal number of syllables, and the stress or accent falls regularly on every second or every third syllable.

**dactyl**: a group of three syllables having the first long and the others short (— 88). English metrists adopt the term to denote a group having the first stressed, the others unstressed (*e.g.* the word "consonant"): the antepenultimate syllable (the third from the end) is thus either long or stressed.

52. **the masculine rhyme**: *e.g.* "sense" rhyming to "immense" in English or French; the female rhyme; *e.g.* "never," "sever"; the *sdrucchiola*: *e.g.* "pitiful," "city full." Many Italian words end with unstressed syllables, and this makes masculine rhyme rarer in their poetry than in English.

## XVIII

**Clauserus**: a German scholar, Conrad Clauser. Died about 1611 A.D.

**Cornutus**: a Stoic celebrated by the Roman satirist Persius, who was his pupil. He was banished by Nero.

53. **Landino**: a Florentine scholar, lecturer and writer of the fifteenth century; a student of Horace, Virgil, Petrarch and Dante.

**you shall dwell upon superlatives**: *i.e.* poets whose patron you may be will celebrate you in their verse as possessing all virtues in superlative degree.

**with Dante's Beatrix or Virgil's Anchises**, whose spirits, according to their poets, dwell for ever in Paradise or Elysium.

**the dull-making cataract of Nilus**: tradition said that those who stayed near the thundering cataracts of the Nile became deaf.

**the planet-like music**: it was believed that the spheres in their revolutions made wonderful music, which the dull ears of mortals could never hear.

**mome**: a dunce or lout. **Momus**: the god of grumbling; an allegorical figure in Hesiod's *Theogony*. A Momus of poetry would be a fault-finding critic.

**rhymed to death**: Irish enchanters were supposed so to get rid of vermin. Cp. Rosalind (*As You Like It*, III. ii.), "I was never so berhymed since Pythagoras' time, that I was an Irish rat."



## QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

NOTE.—*Acc. S.* means “according to Sidney’s opinion as expressed in this essay.”

### I

1. What examples and what considerations are Sidney’s excuse for taking upon himself the defence of poetry?

### II (p. 2)

1. What (*acc. S.*) is the first reason why lovers of learning should honour poetry? What does he tell us, in support of his contention, about certain philosophers? Are these general statements true of English poetry and learning?

2. What (*acc. S.*) is the difference between historiographers (*i.e.* writers of history) and poets? In what ways have the former been indebted to the latter?

3. What does Sidney seem, so far, to mean by a “poet”?

4. In what ways may it help, and in what ways hinder an historian to possess the imaginative power of a poet?

5. Write an essay on “History and Poetry.”

### III (p. 4)

1. What proofs of the honour in which they held poetry does Sidney find in the language and legends of the Romans? of the Hebrew people? of the Greeks?

2. Recollect the arguments with which Sidney maintains that the poet deserves the name of “Maker,” and that no other kind of “artificer” deserves it.

3. Does Sidney seem to admit the right of a poet to show life realistically?

Is it the only function or the highest function of art to present an idealised world to the imagination?

Explain Sidney’s view and your own as fully as possible.

4. Collect from as much of the essay as you have read phrases notable for expressive force, wit, or pleasant cadence.

5. Quote images which seem to you beautiful and aptly used. Quote any that seem exaggerated or savour of euphuism.

6. Paraphrase the passage beginning, "But let those things alone and go to man," down to "why and how that maker made him."

#### IV (p. 8)

1. What (*acc. S.*) is "poesy"? What is the aim of poetry? What is it that "maketh a poet"?

2. Write an essay on "The Justification of Poetry," or "The Pleasure of Poetry," discussing Sidney's views and giving your own.

3. Paraphrase the passage beginning "But because this second sort" (p. 9), down to "what may be and should be."

#### V (p. 10)

1. What does Sidney "commonly call" learning? How does he define the aim of all learning?

2. What does Sidney mean by "serving sciences"?

3. Repeat Sidney's description of the moral philosophers and of the historian.

4. Recount the imagined controversy between the philosophers and the historians, quoting their phrases and illustrations. How does Sidney summarise their arguments?

#### VI (p. 13)

1. Why (*acc. S.*) do law and government not rank among those sciences which endeavour to make men love goodness?

2. *We now use their names to signify their trades*: mention other names so used.

3. In illustration of what point does Sidney refer to Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*; the story of the Prodigal Son; Aesop's Fables?

4. Paraphrase the passage beginning "For as in outward things" (p. 14), down to "speaking picture of poesy."

#### VII (p. 17)

1. *Many times he [the historian] must tell events whereof he can yield no cause, or if he do, it must be poetically.*

What does Sidney mean here by "poetically"? How far would a historian be justified in writing thus? Quote an instance of such writing.

2. What advantages has the poet's story (*acc. S.*) over the historian's as giving an example to be followed? How far do you agree with Sidney's opinion?

3. What contrast does Sidney draw between the working of justice as observed in history and as represented in "poetry"? Quote his illustrations.

4. Study the observance and violation of poetic justice in three or four plays, *e.g.* the *Oedipus King* of Sophocles and Shakespeare's *Richard III.* and *Macbeth*. Write an essay on any aspect of the subject suggested by your study.

#### VIII (p. 20)

1. What images does Sidney use to express the poet's power of making men love and desire goodness? Quote some of his most vivid and sweet-sounding phrases.

2. Paraphrase the passage beginning "The philosopher sheweth you the way" (p. 20), down to "out of natural conceit the philosophers drew it."

3. Learn by heart the sentence in which Sidney summarises the arguments of this part of the essay.

#### IX (p. 24)

1. What is pastoral poetry? Name some English pastoral poems written before this essay and some written since.

2. Define elegiac poetry and name some English elegies.

3. Name some English satiric poems written before this essay and some of later date. Discuss the advantages of verse as a vehicle for satire, quoting in illustration of each point. Discuss the statement that "satiric poetry can never be great poetry."

4. With what other quality does Sidney seem to identify comedy? Is he right in doing so?

5. Show with reference to some of Shakespeare's plays, whether the best comedy is necessarily "scornful."

6. Name plays which Sidney may have had in mind when writing his first sentence "of the high and excellent tragedy" (p. 26).

7. Describe the scene in which Shakespeare shows how an acted tragedy "mollifies the hardened heart" of a murderer.

8. What other form of poetry does Sidney seem to include in the term "lyric"? Name examples of both kinds and explain the difference between them.

9. What kind of poetry does Sidney appear to like best? Name some poems of the kind and say what general term denotes their form. Define this term.

10. If severed they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtful (p. 24). Mention some kinds of writing of which this might prove untrue.

11. How does Sidney defend the representation of vice and folly in poetry and drama? On what other grounds may it be defended?

12. Write a critical dialogue between Sidney and a modern admirer of the old English and Scottish ballads, on the subject of any one of these.

13. Write an essay on *The Pleasure of Tragedy*.

#### X (p. 29)

Recapitulate the essay as far as the end of this section. Make from Sidney's summary (X) an analytic table of contents. Following your table, mark the place in your text where each new argument begins and write a marginal "heading."

#### XI (p. 29)

1. How does Sidney deal with the less respectable poet-haters?

2. On what grounds does Sidney defend "rhyming and versing"? Write a short essay attacking or defending the use of rhyme in poetry.

#### XII (p. 32)

1. What are the "more important imputations" which Sidney now proceeds to answer? How does he answer the second charge?

2. What is Sidney's feeling towards love and lovers? How does he answer the third charge?

3. How does Sidney deal with the allegation that poetry makes men idle and unwarlike? Repeat his stories and illustrations.

4. Quote from this part of the essay sentences notable for brief and trenchant expression. Quote picturesque metaphors and musical phrases.

#### XIII (p. 37)

1. Explain Sidney's allusion to Plato.

2. What is Sidney's feeling towards Plato?

3. What does Sidney tell us here of the fame of Homer? of Euripides?

4. What is the charge that Sidney is answering in this part of the essay? How does he answer it?

5. Learn by heart the last sentence of this section.

XIV (p. 40)

1. What famous men does Sidney mention as being lovers of poetry ?
2. What (*acc. S.*) has been the effect, in England, of a period of peace upon the esteem in which poetry is held ?
3. What (*acc. S.*) was the reason why some gifted writers of the time refrained from publishing their poems ?
4. How does Sidney speak of his own claim to be thought a poet ?
5. Of what use is schooling to a poet ? Give Sidney's opinion fully, and your own.
6. Write an essay on *The effect of war and peace on English Poetry*, treating the subject either historically or with modern application.

XV (p. 43)

1. Make a list of really great works, such as Sidney would have called poetry, written in England within the fifty years preceding his essay.
2. *Yet had he great wants* (p. 43). Write, in imitation of Sidney, a development of this statement.
3. Write a criticism of the *Shepherd's Kalender* dealing with the points on which Sidney comments, with some general conclusions as to the use in poetry of "old, rustic language."
4. Repeat Sidney's strictures on *Gorboduc* and the tragedies of his time.
5. Discuss "Aristotle's precept." Examine in three or four plays (Greek, French or English) how far the unities of time and of place have been maintained. Debate the value of these unities.
6. *The player . . . must begin with telling where he is.* Give examples from Elizabethan plays of this kind of exposition, and say which you consider skilful.
7. Debate the advantages and disadvantages of the use of scenery in the theatre, and discuss the ideal setting for any one of Shakespeare's tragedies.
8. How far is a dramatist justified in "framing history to the most tragical convenience" ? What kind of truth must he observe ? Write a note on Shakespeare's handling of history.
9. Mention examples of the use of the "Nuntius" in tragedy ; say, explaining your reasons, which you think the most interesting.
10. In what phrase does Sidney describe the mingling of comedy with tragedy ? What may be said in defence of the practice which he condemns ?

11. What subjects does Sidney consider fit, and what unfit, for comic treatment on the stage? Give examples of as many of these as possible from Shakespeare's comedies.

12. What is Sidney's estimate of much of the love poetry of his time? Do you find these qualities in his own sonnets?

13. Summarise the arguments of this part of the essay.

#### XVI (p. 48)

1. What are the artifices of diction to which Sidney objects in the verse, prose and oratory of his time?

2. Quote examples, from books which Sidney may have had in mind, of the affectations which he condemns. Mention some examples of the same vices, if you find any, in his own writings.

3. In what connection does Sidney mention Demosthenes, Cicero, Crassus?

4. Write an essay on *The use and abuse of simile and metaphor in poetry*.

5. Write an essay demonstrating that in oratory (or, if you prefer, in drama), *ars est celare artem*.

#### XVII (p. 50)

1. What (*acc. S.*) are the great advantages of English with regard to grammar, rhythm and rhyme?

2. *The English . . . is fit for both sorts.* Examine some of Sidney's experiments with classical metre and say whether you consider them successful. Write a note on the use of quantitative metre in English.

3. Mark the *caesura* in some passages from Elizabethan dramatists.

4. Deduce from Sidney's remarks on rhyme, how such words as "vision," "salvation," "devotion," were pronounced.

5. Write an essay comparing the fitness for poetry of any two languages that you know.

#### XVIII (p. 52)

1. Complete the tabular summary and marginal index of the essay as proposed in Section X.

2. What does Sidney attempt in each of the three long sentences of his peroration?

3. In what mood does Sidney conclude his Defence of Poesy?

## GENERAL QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Write an essay describing the impression of Sidney's character and intellect made upon you by the "Defence."
2. Read Shelley's "Defence of Poetry" and show in what points it supplements and in what differs from Sidney's.
3. If Sidney had written his "Defence" in the year 1600, with what further kinds of literature and versification would he have had to deal? What new faults would he have blamed? What new experiments would he have praised?
4. Read again some poems which you like (by Coleridge, Keats and others) and which seem to have no directly moral intention or effect. Write a "Defence" of such poetry.
5. Define "Poetry."

## BOOKS TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS ESSAY

- I. A fully annotated edition of *The Defence of Poesy* should be accessible to the class for reference. Shuckburgh's edition (*Apologie for Poetrie*: Cambridge University Press), which is in the main a reproduction of Olney's text, has good notes and introductory matter. A. S. Cook's edition (*Defense of Poesy*: Ginn & Co.) has elaborate studies and notes which should be helpful to the teacher.
- II. *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney*, by J. A. Symonds (Macmillan, *English Men of Letters* series).
- III. *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*: an admirable selection with biographical and critical introductions. by J. Drinkwater (*Muses' Library*, Routledge).
- IV. *English Critical Essays: Nineteenth Century* (Oxford University Press) contains much that should be read in the preparation of studies and discussions. Professor Bradley's *Poetry for Poetry's Sake*, in *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (Macmillan), his *Uses of Poetry* (*English Association*), some essays in Mr. Drinkwater's *Prose Papers*, as well as many other pieces of contemporary criticism, give expression to a point of view somewhat opposed to Sidney's and would supply suggestions for essays and debates.



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